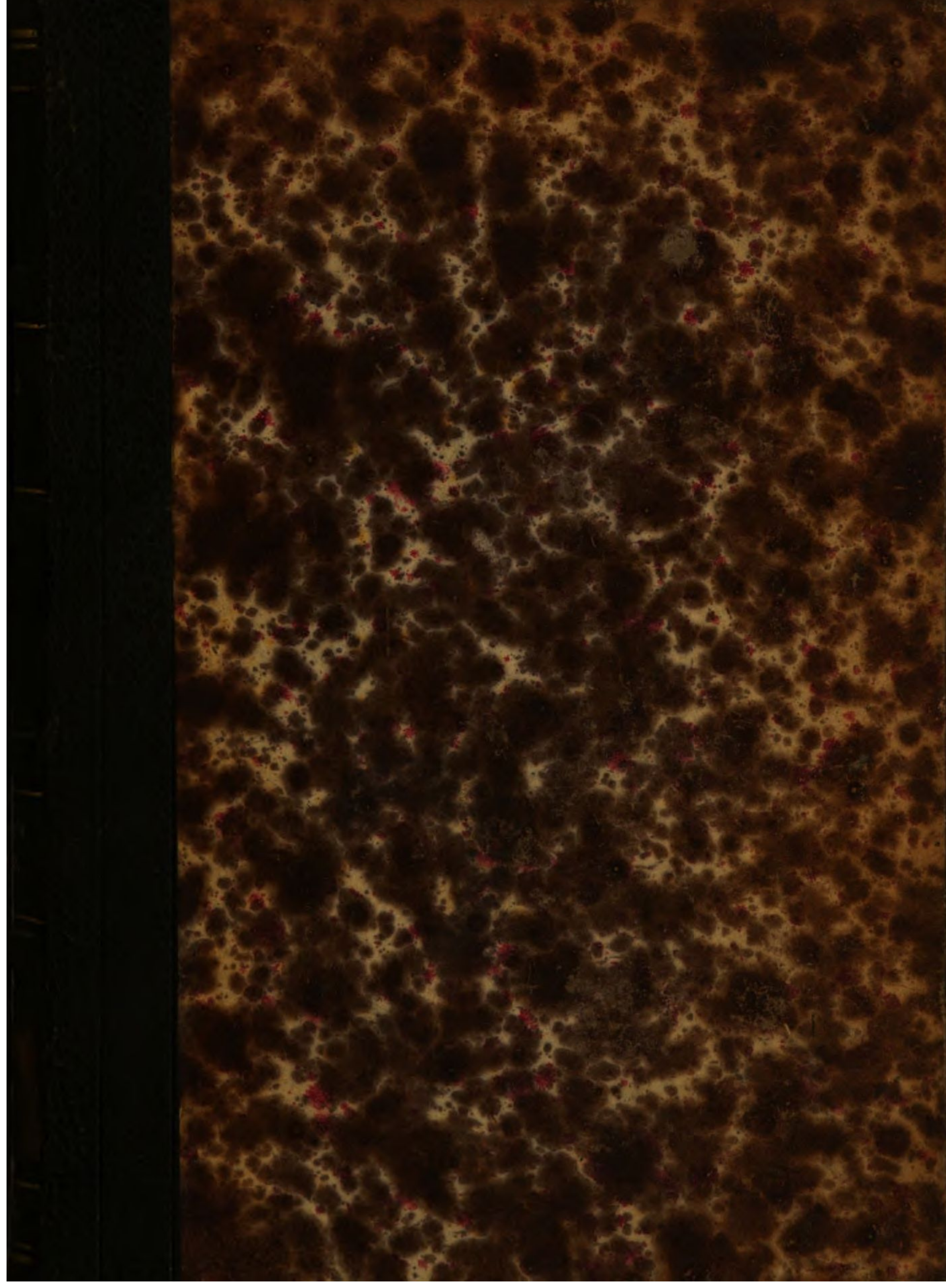




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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1312.

MURPHY'S MASTER.

IN ONE VOLUME.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

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MURPHY'S MASTER.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "FOUND DEAD."

FREDERICK LEHLMANN

THE BOOK

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THE AUTHOR.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1873.

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BY THE

AUTHOR OF "FOUND DEAD"

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TO
FREDERICK LEHMANN
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED BY HIS FRIEND
THE AUTHOR.

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MURPHY'S MASTER

NOTE.

CHAPTER I.

Period.

FOR the Buccaneer Regulations mentioned in this book, the Author (who, although a novelist, has never been in the Piratical line) is not responsible. They were those in use with the famous Captain Bartho Roberts, who, with most of his gallant crew, was hung at Antigua.

Now and then, for a brief space, there was a lull, but only that the Prince of the power of the air might collect his forces for a more strenuous effort, as though to sweep the earth of all that crumbled it which man had made. The young moon had hidden herself, as though in terror, and it was but seldom that the clouds permitted a single star to peer through their long ranks, as they fled like a beaten army across the sky.

A white toll-house and a white gate that stretched across the road could, however, be just made out.

NOTE

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MURPHY'S MASTER.

CHAPTER I.

Pursued.

IT was a boisterous winter's night; and although the long, straight road which I have in my mind (for to the first scene of this strange story my own eyes were witness) was many a mile distant from the coast, you might have thought, from the roaring of the trees that lined one side of it for miles, that it skirted the very shore. Now and then, for a brief space, there was a lull, but only that the Prince of the powers of the air might collect his forces for a more strenuous effort, as though to sweep the earth of all that cumbered it which man had made. The young moon had hidden herself, as though in terror, and it was but seldom that the clouds permitted a single star to peer through their hurrying ranks, as they fled like a beaten army across the sky.

A white toll-house and a white gate that stretched across the road could, however, be just made out,

gleaming through the stormful gloom; but even these, from their colour, looked weird and ghost-like, and by no means relieved the loneliness and desolation of the scene. Opposite the toll-house was an inn; but being built of darker material, it was not visible: not a light shone from its many windows, for the hour was three o'clock, and all its inmates, save one, were abed and slept—rocked to slumber by the storm. Suddenly, after an outburst of elemental violence that outdid all that had preceded it, and which was dying away like the passionate cry of some disappointed beast of prey, there was heard a human voice: "Gate, gate!" It must have proceeded from powerful lungs indeed, since it was repeated before the galloping of horses' hoofs and the noise of wheels could be heard which proclaimed the approach of the vehicle which carried him who uttered this impetuous summons.

"Gate, gate!"

"Curse the fellow; he's asleep," exclaimed another voice.—"Get out, Dick, and lift it off its hinges. Here, take a lamp."

As the speaker leans hurriedly forward to take one of the dog-cart lamps from its place, the light is thrown full upon him. A tall, black-bearded man, very handsome, though long past his youth; his stooping position brings the blood into his face

a little, else it would be very pale; his eyes are fiery and bloodshot. You would say he was a drunkard but for the steadiness of hand with which he disengages the lamp, and hands it to his fellow, notwithstanding the fury of the wind, which is once more up and roaring, and the impatient pawing of the mare he holds in his iron gripe. She is bay, but, flecked with her own foam, she looks in the darkness black and white. His lower lip is bleeding, bitten through, perhaps, in his irritation and impatience; and on his shirt-front, among its coral studs, there is a red spot which is not coral, but blood. He is in evening dress, and notwithstanding the wild inclemency of the night has no great coat or wrapper of any kind. By his face and dress, you would take him for a gentleman; no one with brains could possibly take him for a vulgar person; but if a gentleman, he is plainly not one of the conventional type, who never hurries himself, nor gets in a passion. His eyes are flaming with rage; and he pours upon the turnpike gate anathemas so choice, and yet various, that it seems quite a pity to waste them on an inanimate object. If the turnpike man would but put his head out of window! But that neglectful official, who has a son at sea, is dreaming of a great tempest in the tropics, which Jack described to him in his last letter (six months

old); and though he dimly hears that familiar cry of "Gate, gate!" confuses it with the captain's orders, howled through the speaking-trumpet.

"*Quiet, quiet!* you devil!"—this to the mare; and the tall man (you can now see he is very tall) stands up in the dog-cart, and peers back upon the road he has come, and listens: nothing is to be seen but a wall of darkness, and nothing to be heard but the roaring wind. Somewhat appeased, as it seems, by this negative result, he then addresses his companion (to whose tardiness in opening the gate he has never once alluded, notwithstanding his impatience with the obstacle itself): "Shall I come and help you, Dick, or shall I break this scoundrel's windows with my whip-handle?"

"No, no, Masther Frank," returned the other, straining and striving at the hinges; "I'll have it up in a minute. It is just as well not to be seen by more people than we can help. One—two: there it is, off at last."

He crossed the road with his burden, to let the vehicle pass through, and then placed the gate half-open, and fastened it in that position with a huge stone.

"There; now they'll think the way is clear," observed he grimly; "and if it's wheels that is afther us, I pity the next comer."

"They'll ride, Dick; you may take your oath of that."

"I suppose they will," growled the other, as he climbed into his seat. "If I'd 'a given it a thought, I'd 'a hamstrung the horses."

The speaker of this truculent speech was a short, broad-shouldered man, of rough, though by no means ruffianly exterior. A cloth cap partly concealed his features, but what could be seen of them was rather attractive than otherwise, unless, indeed, you happened to be very anti-Milesian, for they were of that careless Irish type which seems to presage little of evil beyond dirt and drunkenness, and to promise faithfulness and endless fun. He wore a long frieze overcoat that reached to his gaiters, and though apparently of the same age as his companion, his appearance had nothing else in common with him. Their mutual relation in life would in fact at once have been taken for that of servant and master, except for the unusual warmth of manner that distinguished both, whenever they addressed one another. Dick sat on the hind seat, in order, doubtless, to watch the road along which their pursuers were expected, but always sideways, so that he could talk, as it were, into the other's ear—a nearness of communication, indeed, which the raging of the gale demanded.

"You'll be gettin' cold, Masther Frank," observed he presently, the strong Irish accent in which he spoke now intensified by affectionate emotion. "Just put this about you."

"No wraps for me, Dick, to-night; I feel, even as it is, as though my very neck-tie choked me. Besides, that's your own coat, my good fellow;" and he put aside the frieze that his companion offered him, with a steady but gentle hand.

"Sure, and why wouldn't it be?" urged the other. "Ain't I used to cold and such-like? Haven't I been reared up hard from the cradle?—not like you, Masther Frank, though we fed at the same mother's breast."

"We did so, Dick; but that's no reason why you should literally give me the coat off your back; though I well know you would do more than that to serve me any day."

"Yes, a deal more, in troth!"

"And yet, why should you, Dick? That sometimes puzzles me; for really I've done little for you."

"Nothin' at all, sir, bar watchin' me, like a mother, for weeks, when nobody else would come nigh me, for fear of catchin' the spots! Nothin' at all, bar seein' me through that bad piece of work at Limerick Sessions, when I'd never have seen ould Ireland

again at all, at all, but for you speakin' up for me, before them all, in the court-house! I owe you nothin' but life and liberty, that's true, sir; and they are things which nobody values!"

"But, my good fellow, I ran no personal risk in either of those things. I had been vaccinated, and was therefore secure from catching the small-pox; and as for speaking up for you in the court-house, why, I was tarred with the same brush myself, and it would have been a mean and cowardly act, indeed, had I left you to bear the consequences of my own counsel."

"You're always right, Masther Frank. I dare say, if the thing was properly put, you're more obligated to me nor I am to you. But in the mean time" (and here he changed his bantering tone for one of uncommon earnestness and fervour) "I'm your friend and servant—yes, just that, with the blessin' of God" (he took off his cloth cap, and made the sign of the cross): "drunk or sober, hale or sick, I'm your slave for life. I know it's foolish, sir" (for he saw the other was about to speak), "but it's the same milk does it. It's stronger, by far, nor the same blood."

A groan burst from the other's lips; and he lashed the mare, who was already going at headlong speed.

"That was a nice thing to say to the young masther, after what has happened," muttered Dick to himself. "Holy Moses, what an omadhawn I am!"

Not a word was exchanged between the pair for several minutes; and, indeed, the rate at which they were going almost precluded it. But presently, as the pace slackened somewhat, in consequence of some rising ground, the one who was called Master Frank once more broke silence.

"Dick," said he, "I want you to listen to me with all the sense you have, and as little of the fantastic notions belonging to County Tipperary as possible. You have shown your devotion to my person; and if I were to part with you to-day for ever, I should say you were the most faithful friend that ever man had. In accompanying me to Falston, I little thought, of course, that I was causing risk either to myself or you; but as it has happened, I have done you a most serious injury. Are you aware, Dick, that, in the eye of the law, you have become an accessory after the fact?"

"Bedad! I'm not, sir; but it's yourself that's always afther tellin' me fine news; and I can easily believe it. It must be a grand thing, sure!"

Richard Murphy's countenance, as it reposed almost upon his companion's shoulder, was so

singularly free from expression, that it was impossible to glean from it whether he was in joke or earnest. Frank Kavanagh, however, knew his henchman much too well to be in doubt as to his meaning.

"You are hiding your feelings, Dick," continued he, with irritation, "under a mask of humour, when I wish you, above all things, to be serious and frank. The deed that has been done this night—unpremeditated, undreamed of, as Heaven knows it was—will be held by the law of the land to be no less than Murder. The provocation will never be taken into account, nor the long years of hypocrisy and deceit. If it was to do again, Dick? if I saw his mocking face set close to mine once more, and heard him sneer: 'You bastard'—"

"Did he say that, Masther Frank?" interrupted Dick, with intense excitement. "O the villain!"

"He flouted me; he spoke bitter things of my mother, as though she had not been his own too. And then he attacked our father's memory: that was too much. When I remembered how I had seen Louis fawn and flatter, and strive to cozen the kind old man every way; and saw him then, triumphant in his fraud, and sneering at the folly of his dead benefactor, I took him by the throat, Dick—I"—

"Hush, hush! Put my coat on, Masther Frank; there's a spot on your shirt-front that is not iron-mowld. I saw that from the first, though I didn't like to speak. Hide it, Masther Frank, lest them might see it that has less right than I to know how it got there;" and he wrapped the coat around his stalwart companion, who seemed neither to consent nor to resist, as tenderly as a mother cloaks her babe.

"He brought it on his own head, I tell you," cried the other fiercely, as though in answer to some reproachful question. "He denied me my rights, my natural rights, and what, but for him, would have been my legal ones. If he had only been fair-spoken, though dishonest"—

"Bah! why trouble yourself," broke in Dick, "with thinkin' about the Thing? It's vain to cry over spilt"—

"He struck me first," continued Master Frank, not heeding the other's interruption: "I feel the blow on my cheek yet. He was a dead man then, and he knew it. I had no idea there was such strength in him, Dick."

"He came of a good stock, you see," observed Murphy coolly. "The breedin' told at last with him, though it was rather late. Upon my life, Masther Frank, I can't see what you are makin' this

bother about, for conscience' sake. He was a bad lot altogether, savin' his brother's presence, and his end is a good riddance to all that's in it. If this had but happened in the ould counthry, the boys would have stuck by you with alibis and everything necessary, and there would have been no trouble about the matter at all, at all."

"That may be, Dick; but, unhappily, what has been done, has been done here; and at the very best, it is quite certain that I shall never see the boys again. I must put the broad seas between myself and England, if I would save my neck. And that brings me to what I wished to say at first. If the law takes hold of me, and finds you in my company, it will go hard with you also; for it is as like as not that some one down yonder"—he pointed to the road behind them—"may recognize your honest face. As for me, I am a lost man, unless I can leave Europe, and get somewhere out of the reach of what these fools call Justice."

"It's as bad as that, sir, is it?" answered Murphy. "I'd no idea they'd be so hard upon you? It's the divil 'gives them the gumption to do it: he knows that if you were with us, the Good Cause at home must triumph, sooner or later; and so, all along of a family squabble, he gets you put out of the way."

“No, Dick, no,” replied the other mournfully; “the Good Cause is dead, at all events for my lifetime. The match was applied too soon, and so, after a brief flicker, the fire went out, and will now be harder to kindle than ever. I told you how it would be, when you struck the light; and my advice to you now is, to go home as quickly as possible, and lie there quiet, and persuade the boys to do the like. I have plenty of money for you”——

“You’re not goin’ to *bribe* me to leave you, Masther Frank?” interrupted the other. “It’s hard enough to put it so to me, any way.”

“Bribe you? of course not, you foolish fellow: I do but point out what is the sensible, and, I think, the proper course for you to adopt. You leave me in good health, and, so far as funds go, in prosperity; you have nothing, therefore, to reproach yourself with.”

“Holy Moses, only hear him talk!” ejaculated Murphy. “It isn’t Masther Frank at all that I am listenin’ to, but Pat Morris, the Limerick attorney! ‘Nothing to reproach myself with!’ The boys would not think that when I got back to County Tipperary, I reckon. ‘And how did you leave the young masther, whom we all love so?’ inquires one. ‘Oh, finely,’ says I; ‘unless they’ve hanged him. I didn’t stay to see it out, but filled my own pockets,

and'—— As sure as death, Masther Frank, I hear horses' hoofs behind us."

"I know it," answered the other calmly; "I have heard them for some minutes. There are two men at least, but it is no matter if there were half-a-dozen. I will not be taken alive."

"Divil a fear of you, Masther Frank. It is much more these gentlemen's look-out nor ours. I've got the pistols under the sate here."

"What pistols?"

"Why, your own, of course. A gentleman never moves without his pistols. I packed them up when I heerd tell of you goin' to Falston; 'for,' says I to myself, 'they'll quarrel, will Masther Frank and Louis, to a certainty; and then what a comfort it will be to both to know that everythin' is at hand to settle the business like gentlemen.'"

"Did you think, then, that I should shoot, in cold blood, at my own brother?"

"I thought that there would be a difficulty of some sort—such as one of you, at laste, wouldn't be willin' the lawyers should meddle with. But since that has been got over in another way, so much the better; the pistols are still to the fore. If these gentlemen only knew what was waitin' for them, they wouldn't be in such an infernal hurry. Don't you disturb yourself, Masther Frank: I never

was so beautifully fixed for shootin' in my life; it's quite a luxury. But keep the mare well in hand, for she isn't used to standin' fire."

While he was thus speaking, Dick stooped beneath the seat, and drawing from their case a couple of pistols, deliberately capped them, and then sat calmly with one in each hand awaiting events.

"There has enough blood been spilled to-night already," said the other earnestly, without, however, interfering with these preparations for receiving cavalry; "and I would give much to escape these fellows even upon their own account. Surely it is about here that the road forks to Ascot: if we could only take that turning, and so double upon them, we should be safe so long as the dark held."

"True; but the dark is so divilish dark, I doubt we shall hardly see the turnin'; it must, however, as you say, be somewhere nigh at hand. Keep the mare well in hand, sir; and I'll douse the glims, so that they may not see we have left the road."

"That's well thought of; but they ride fast, those fellows, and you must be quick about it."

"We have five good minutes, Masther Fred.; this tearin' wind is with them, and brings up the sound"—

"Stop! Hi! Stop!"

The cry arose right in front of them; and the flaring lamps, one of which Murphy was in act to remove, fell full upon a gesticulating figure standing in the midst of the dark road. It was that of a very young man, attired in homely garments, and bearing the homeliest luggage of the wayfarer—a hedge-stick across his shoulder, at the end of which depended a small bundle.

“Clear the way!” cried Kavanagh, stung to reckless fury by the imminence of the peril behind him, “or, by Heaven, I’ll drive over you.”

But the boy, throwing down his bundle, cast himself upon the bridle of the mare, and clung to it fast, though in her fierce career she carried him along with her; and never ceased his cry of “Stop, stop, stop!”

“I’ll ‘stop’ you, young fellow,” muttered Murphy between his teeth, as he clambered back over the dog-cart for a pistol.

“The tree—the fallen tree!” screamed the boy. “Keep to the right, or you are both dead men!”

At that piercing cry, Kavanagh mechanically pulled his right rein, and the vehicle sprang into the air, once, twice, thrice, and then came to a full stop. To leap out was with the two men the work of an instant.

“Hold the mare, boy.—Help me here, Dick, to

pull the tree right across: so. I don't hear the horses now: how's that?"

"We must have passed the turnin', and they are stoppin' there, in doubt of which road to take."

"Just so.—Boy, you have done us a good turn," said Kavanagh kindly: "another foot to the left, and we should have gone to the devil; whereas, as it is, we have but got a shaking over the branches. What can we do for *you*?"

"If you'd give me a lift, sir, towards town, I'd be very grateful," said the lad. He was a wholesome, blue-eyed young fellow, with a comely face, flushed with his late exertions, and a bright, eager air.

"You shall have it, lad. Go, fetch your bundle."

"Nay, Masther Frank," remonstrated Murphy, as the young fellow obeyed; "that is surely most imprudent; and there—see—he has noticed how the tree lies."

The boy, whose attention had been hitherto absorbed in holding the mare, was now, indeed, observing with surprise, that that which had been before an obstacle difficult to avoid, was now become an effectual barricade. "Begging your pardon, sir," said he ingenuously, "I fear you have made things worse for the next comers, instead of better."

"What the Divil is that to you, sir?" cried Murphy angrily.

"Hush, hush! The lad is an honest lad," said Kavanagh, "and wants to do right to everybody. I was like that myself, at one time, God help me!—Look here, boy: if *you* were followed by persons who wished to punish you for what they deemed a crime, but of which your conscience held you innocent, would you not do your best to balk them?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," exclaimed the boy warmly: "moreover, that is just what might be happening to myself now."

"What! Have you been trangressing the laws already?—Why, this must be a countryman of our own, Dick!"

Dick muttered something which sounded like a compliment to his country, at the expense of the new-comer.

"I have broken no laws, sir," said the boy, steadily; "I have only run away from step-father."

"Very right, very proper," remarked Master Frank approvingly. "Curiously enough, I also am running away from my step-mother, Madam England.—By gad! they're coming, Dick!"

"Of course they are. That's what comes of wasting precious moments in chatterin' to every

young vagabond one meets with upon the road: and all the time with them gig-lamps turned right round, as much as to say: 'This way: here we are: you've taken the wrong turnin', gentlemen.'"

"They will prove Wreckers' lights, to lure them to destruction, Dick. Douse them, douse them."

In one instant all was dark; not a trace of trunk or branch could now be seen of the huge tree that lay before them like a rampart. On the still furious wind was borne once more the sound of galloping hoofs and clanging steel.

"It is the patrol from the Heath," murmured the lad in awe-stricken tones; "I hear the clanging of their scabbards."

The wind was behind their pursuers: the hill sloped from them towards the tree; they were riding at headlong speed.

"O sir! they will be killed. As *you* would have"—

A heavy hand was laid on the lad's mouth, a grasp of iron upon his wrist. He could neither speak nor move, but only listen. Nearer and nearer came the beat of feet, the clang of steel; the very champ-ing of the bits could be heard; then crash, crash came horse and man, with one terrible cry, that seemed to pierce the wintry sky!

CHAPTER II.

Taking Service.

THERE was silence for a minute, save for the roaring of the gale, then the boy felt himself lifted into the cart, and away sped the bay mare on her road again, as though she knew that Death and Ruin were at her heels.

"They're gruelled, Masther Frank," was the first observation that was made in allusion to this catastrophe; "them patrols is too heavy for steeple-chasin'."

"I didn't cut down the tree. Their blood be on their own heads," muttered Kavanagh gloomily. Then with eagerness: "Where's the boy? I hope he got no hurt?"

"He's here, sir, safe enough. He wanted a lift, so I thought it just as well to give it to him for a mile or two, so as to keep him out of harm's way. If I hadn't gagged the young divil, he'd 'a given warnin' to them fellows."

"Put him here in front."

"No, no, Masther Frank; you've got your hands full with the mare; and he wriggles like an eel."

"Put him *here*, I say!" repeated Kavanagh imperiously.

The next instant the lad was swung on to the front seat, with as much ease as though he had been a carpet-bag. And yet he was a fine grown young fellow of seventeen or eighteen, with plenty of strength and vigour of his own, as had been already evidenced by his stopping the mare.

"What is your name, lad?" asked Kavanagh kindly.

A stifled cough was the only reply.

"You're throttling the boy, Murphy. Did not I tell you to leave him to me?"

"I only put my finger in his neckhankecher to keep him studdy," exclaimed Murphy apologetically.

"Then take it out. He has done us a great benefit at the risk of his own life and limb, and I will not have him ill-used. Do you hear me, Murphy?"

It was clear that Murphy had no good-will towards the boy, not to say that, on the whole, he would far rather have strangled him than not; yet his tone was that of absolute submission as he answered, "I hear you, Masther Frank, and it is done."

"My name is Robert Chesney," said the lad, articulating with some difficulty.

"Take a drop of the crater, Robert Chesney," observed Dick, at the same time handing him a whiskey-flask. "There's nothin' like it for a sore

throat. Never mind av it does burn you a bit: can't you see the masther wants you to talk to him?"

He spoke with entire simplicity; it seemed to him that what Master Frank desired must needs be acceded to by everybody, at no matter what personal inconvenience.

"If it does not hurt you, let me hear your story, boy," said Kavanagh. "How came you to be out on the high-road in such a mad night as this?"

"There are worse things than the winter winds, sir," said the lad bitterly, "such as cruelty, poverty, and hopelessness, and it was they that drove me out into it to-night. I am seventeen, and too old to be beaten any longer by a drunken step-father."

"Unless, by bearing that, you could help your mother," said Kavanagh. There was a tenderness in his voice, which contrasted very strangely with the passion he had so lately exhibited, and with the vindictive coolness which had permitted the patrol to rush upon their doom.

"My mother died last year, sir. There is nobody at home to care for me. Step-father is one of the keepers in the Queen's forest; he never liked me; but of late he has taken to cudgel me, and I could not stand that, even for mother's sake."

"I don't blame you for that, Robert. On the contrary, I should have cudgelled *him*."

"So I did, sir," replied the other naively. "We had a rough-and-tumble out in the oak copse, and I got the worst of it. I knew it was not so bad as I should get if I waited till to-morrow morning; and so, when he went out to watch, I packed up the few things I could call my own, and ran away. I had scarce got into the road yonder, when the big tree fell, within a yard of me; and seeing your lamps, I ran on ahead to warn you. That's my story."

"All of it?" asked Kavanagh, casting a searching glance at his companion. The rage of the tempest had spent itself, and the stars had begun to peep through the thinning clouds.

"Yes, all of it; so far, at least" (and here, notwithstanding his bold speech, the young fellow blushed like a girl), "as it concerns you to know."

"'Tis best you keep a civil tongue in your head," exclaimed Murphy, scandalized at this audacity, "when the master does you the honour to ask a question."

"The lad is quite right," said Master Frank good-naturedly. "We don't boast of our sweet-hearts at seventeen.—Do we, Robert? So the wide world is before you, where to choose, and only one friend in it?"

"Nay, sir; I have not one friend."

"You are wrong there, my lad; for no man ever did a good turn to Frank Kavanagh, let me tell you, without making a friend."

An ejaculation of horror burst from Murphy's lips. "There now, we *must* kill him, Masther Frank, since you've told him who ye are. Did ever man hear of such madness!" and once more the lad felt his wrist compressed as in a vice, while an arm like a cable stole round his waist.

"Leave the boy, I say!" cried Kavanagh furiously, and for the first time speaking with an Irish accent. "Thousand thunders! have I to speak three times? If you do him hurt, by Heaven, you shall answer to me for it!"

"But he'll tell, Masther Frank."

"*Let* him tell. It would be only *undoing* what he has done for us, if he did.—Yes, boy; I *am* Frank Kavanagh—a name that you will soon hear identified with that of a murderer. Do I *look* like that? I don't deny I did the deed; but yet, I am no murderer. Will you believe them, or me?"

The young fellow looked up in his companion's handsome face, and answered ingenuously: "I shall believe *you*, Mr. Kavanagh; still, I don't think you did right to leave the tree in the road."

"It was a question of those men's lives or mine, Robert Chesney. A hunted man cannot

afford to be squeamish. Now, look you: I like your face, and would gladly do you a good turn, in guerdon for that you have done to me. What shall it be? You need not fear to ask, boy."

"I was thinking, could you take me into your service, sir?" answered the lad hesitatingly.

"You would find it a very poor one, my good lad," said Kavanagh sadly. "I am a desperate man in desperate case. In a few days, if I escape the vengeance of the law, I shall be leaving England for a distant land, and perhaps for ever."

"So be it, sir. Let me go with you. I have heard my step-father say that England is not the place for a moneyless lad."

"But what had you in your mind to do before we met?"

"I was bound for London, to try my fortune."

"Thinking the streets were paved with gold, like Whittington, I suppose! Have you got a cat in your bundle?"

"He'll have one in his bag—more's the pity," muttered Murphy despondently; "and, mark my word, he'll let it out."

"Well, you can hardly be said to change your plan for a worse, since you have none at all, lad," continued Kavanagh. "What can you do with your hands or your head?"

"I can carpenter fairly, sir; and was pretty good at school, in the way of accounts."

"Do you hear *that*, Dick?" said Kavanagh merrily. "The lad knows accounts—a thing which you and I could never compass. Suppose we make him our treasurer and comptroller?"

This change in Kavanagh's mood from grave to gay, from passionate self-justification to almost levity, was by no means shared by his henchman. "You will do as you like, Masther Frank," said he moodily. "I only trust the young man will be grateful and faithful."

"As for faithful, I say nothing of that," said Chesney modestly, "though I will endeavour to prove myself so, if I am taken into your service, sir; but grateful for your good intentions and your kindness, believe me, I already am."

"That's well said lad," said Kavanagh heartily. "And you have 'no objection to travel,' as the advertisements say?" In the midst of a light laugh, he stopped, and added gravely: "I am not offering you a place in the household of a man of fortune, nor is it a tour of pleasure that we are about to take. We shall have a hard life, and an up-hill fight of it; but if you are content to link your lot with that of an outcast, remember——Well, there's my hand upon it."

"Thank you, sir; thank you," cried the boy, with grateful emotion. "I trust you will never have cause to repent the bargain."

"Amen! but I doubt it," muttered Murphy; then in louder tones: "Ye'll surely make him take the oath, Masther Frank?"

"Not I," laughed Kavanagh. "Why, my poor Dick, do you suppose that the words which bind the boys of county Tipperary will have the same effect on a lad from the royal forest of Windsor? He would not even know their meaning. He has an honest face, and I will take his bare word. Come, you must shake hands with our new friend, as I have done, and then we three will meet the world together."

It was curious, and even comical, to mark the conflict of feeling in Mr. Richard Murphy's face as he received this order. Obedience to Kavanagh was a paramount obligation with him, but he could not conceal the intense disfavour with which he regarded this command.

"It's downright mad you are, Masther Frank. Here's my hand, if you must have it so, but——"

"Give it to *him*, man, not to me," cried the other, more merrily than ever. "You're as bad to drive as a pig to market. Hold it tight, Dick, and now say these words after me;" and he spoke a

long sentence in what Chesney rightly judged to be his native Irish. Slowly and reluctantly, with a face such as a child wears who is taking physic with no jam to follow, Murphy repeated this Abra-cadabra.

"Now, Dick is your friend as well as mine, lad," said Kavanagh assuringly.

Murphy muttered something in his own tongue which sounded like a menace.

"Don't be rude, Dick; you should never speak the classical languages before those who have not enjoyed the opportunities of making them their own.—What he said, my lad, was, as it is only fair to tell you, that he reserved to himself the right of putting you to death, in case you should not keep silence as respects what has happened to-night. Now all is settled satisfactorily: and see—there are the lights of London—our journey is coming to an end."

Robert Chesney looked with eagerness in the direction thus indicated, and

Along the dusky highway, near and nearer drawn;
Saw in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;
And his spirit leapt within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looked at, in among the throngs of men.

If he had not met with his present fellow-traveller, his excitement would probably have been far greater; for now (although he knew them not) his future

plans were to be laid out for him by another; he was not about to plunge alone into that unknown and fathomless human sea. His crude purpose had been, to plod through street after street until he should see a carpenter's shop, and there to stop, and ask for employment. A dream which was not destined to become reality. Neither footsore nor friendless, but seated at his ease, and without any immediate cares, he was at liberty to look about him in the great city.

The dawn was breaking as they entered it, and already the streams of traffic were setting in towards the markets. With the country produce carried in the carts and waggon, he was familiar enough, but that only made the amount of it more striking; what was all that he had ever seen in Windsor street upon a market-day to be compared with it! Then what a noise and tumult arose as the day wore on! How different from the stillness of the forest glades to which he had been accustomed, where the scamper of a rabbit through the fern would startle the ear. The streets at first were shuttered, and the gas feebly strove in them against the daylight; then shops began to open, and the thoroughfares to fill; and then again they entered a region where sleep reigned once more. Here the houses were far larger and handsomer, there were

statues, too, and gardens; and many a question rose to Chesney's lips, which, however, did not pass them. His companion's face had become pale and moody: the excitement of the night was probably wearing off, and its consequences making themselves clear to him; at all events, he was disinclined for converse. With scarce the interchange of a word, the three passed through the suburbs, the West End, and part of the city. At last Kavanagh pulled up the mare in an unfrequented street.

"She has done a good night's work," said he; then added to himself with a groan: "I wish to Heaven I could say as much for her driver.—See that they treat her well at the inn, Dick; you will not have much longer to perform that service, since there will be no room for her on shipboard, even if we are so lucky as to get there. Here; take the reins."

"But where are you goin' to, Masther Frank?" asked Dick, aghast.

"To the old place in Herne Street. It will be much better for both of us that we should not be seen together for the present. Take the boy with you to Mulvaney's, and let him want for nothing; and stay there till you hear from me.—Chesney, if, in a moment of rash impulse, I have done wrong

in coupling your fate with my own desperate fortunes, there is still time for you to cry off the bargain.—You hold to it? Good! Then, I conclude you will need no warning, but be in readiness to start with us at a moment's notice—it may be to-morrow night, though Heaven alone knows whither. In the mean time, here are the means to make merry with.”

The next instant the speaker had pressed two pieces of money into the lad's hand, and was retracing with rapid strides the way that he had come. At the end of the street was a warehouse, with a crane projecting from its third floor, from which depended a thick rope; under this he stopped, looked up at it significantly, and placed his hands around his neck, then walked on at increased speed.

“Blessed St. Francis, did you see *that*?” inquired Murphy, in an awe-stricken whisper.

“I did,” said Chesney; “but I don't think Mr. Kavanagh knew that he was doing it.”

“Not know what he was doin'? D'ye mean to say that the young masther has got the fever in his brain again, that—— But maybe he was only jokin'. He was always full of jokes, and fun, and thricks in the ould days—in the ould, ould days.”

There was a tremor in Murphy's voice that in-

stantly drew his companion's eyes upon him. "Don't laugh at me, lad," exclaimed he fiercely, as he shook the bridle, and the gallant mare made shift to trot once more: "don't jeer me, lest I strike you dead." The tears were coursing down Dick's weather-beaten cheeks like rain.

CHAPTER III.

Mulvaney's.

THE rest of their journey was soon ended: Murphy stopped at an inn, where he saw the mare rubbed down and fed, with his own eyes, ere he took his young companion to the lodgings hard by, which Kavanagh had indicated. Mulvaney's was an eating-house of humble exterior, situated in a secluded street, whereof the houses were old and gabled, and mostly built of wood: a piece of streaky bacon and some potatoes appealed to hungry stomachs in the ground-floor window; while above, the words "Good Beds" addressed themselves to tired limbs. The inside of this house, which modestly drew back a little from its neighbours, was of more pretension than the outside: though the rooms were small—with the exception of the public one, which was divided into boxes, shining with grease and age—they were very numerous, and wainscoted with oak. Most persons finding it in so humble a place, would have taken this panelling for discoloured deal, but Chesney, familiar with timber, knew better, and marvelled at it. The staircase was of the same

material, its steps broad and shining: its balustrades curiously carved with fruit and flowers, though these were hardly discernible for the dirt that begrimed them. The mansion had doubtless been the residence of some rich and thrifty citizen in the olden time; it had been the pride of some Dame Margery to keep the oak well polished, and to see that the sleeping-rooms smelled of dried lavender. But Dame Margery had been dead these hundred years and more; and if Widow Mulvaney, who reigned in her stead, had a preference for any odorous herb above another, it was for onions.

The smell of onions always arising from the kitchen, like a perpetual incense, pervaded the whole establishment, which was impregnated with it. You might have taken a square inch of wood-work in the spring-time from any part of the interior of the house, carried it to the Land's End, and stuck it up there for a windy summer, then placed it in a chest of ottar of roses for the winter, and in the spring again, when you took it out, your nose should tell you still: "This came from Mulvaney's." You might steep, you might shatter the wood at your will, but the scent of those onions would cling round it still. They were the chief ingredient in that Irish stew to which the frequenters of Mulvaney's (who were all from the Emerald Isle)

were so patriotically partial. Even at the early hour at which our travellers arrived under this hospitable roof, the grateful perfume was stealing up the kitchen-stairs, and renewing its powers everywhere. Only one chamber, as in the case of Bluebeard's wife, was denied to it. At the back of the great eating-room was a smaller apartment, used, probably, in ancient times, as the citizen's own parlour, from whence he could keep his eye upon the 'prentices in the shop; but now set apart as a withdrawing room for smokers: here the smell of tobacco and the reek of whiskey devoured, like an Aaron's rod, all other odours.

"We'll breakfast in the smoke-room, till Mistress Mulvaney," had been Murphy's first words to the girl who admitted them within-doors; and in this more private chamber their meal had accordingly been spread. While the travellers were doing ample justice to it, there entered through an inner door the proprietress herself, a stout and rosy-cheeked widow, whom Mr. Richard Murphy—rising hastily from his chair, and sweeping the back of his hand across his lips—at once saluted with a very audible kiss.

"Be aisy, Dick," said she, but so calmly, that the words were robbed of their rebuke, "and behave yourself before folk. Who is this?"

"A friend of the young masther's," answered Murphy.

"Good! Then he is welcome, as, of course, are you, Dick; though I am sorry to see you *here*." She looked around her significantly. "What's the matter now, that you must needs have a room with two doors to it?"

"The very divil's loose!" said Murphy; "I mustn't talk about it even to you. There's nothin' agin myself this time; but Chesney—that's the boy yonder—and me are to be quiet here till we have our orders. Can you put us away upstairs somewhere?"

"To be sure I can, if it was for a twelvemonth. You shall have the front room, and Biddy shall leave hers, and come to mine—that will give one to the masther's friend. It is but an attic, but—"

"Any place will do for me, ma'am," interrupted Chesney simply.

"Oh, he ain't a young prince disguised, if that's what you mean," said Murphy, with a coarse laugh.

"He's a sight better looking, and a deal better spoken, than ever you were, anyway, Mr. Imperence!" returned the widow.—"You've been up all night, I reckon, my good lad, and would not be

sorry to feel your bed, so I'll see that it is got ready for you." And off she hurried.

"You'll not take your clothes off, boy, mind that," said Murphy imperiously. "Remember what the young masther said: that you must be ready for a start at a moment's notice; and you'll hould your tongue, no matter how the widow yonder may blarney you; and you'll swear not to leave this house, neither night nor day—"

"I shall obey *Mr. Kavanagh* in every particular," observed Chesney haughtily, and with a strong stress upon the name.

"It will be your better plan, Master Smooth-face, for the hour in which he comes to harm through fault of yours will be your last, as sure as my name's Richard Murphy."

The colour deepened in the lad's wholesome cheek, and his blue eyes flashed scornfully as he replied, "I have seen enough of one bully in my life, Mr. Murphy, to make me very resolute against putting up with another. I was not afraid of your pistol, when you wanted to murder me for stopping your horse, and saving your life, and I am not afraid of your big words; so you may spare your breath for other purposes than to threaten me. You have laid your ugly hand upon me twice—"

"Begorra, and I'll do it a third time, and to some purpose!" cried Murphy with a hideous oath, as he rose to put his words into effect. Chesney also rose, and snatched up a knife from the table.

"This is keeping quiet with a vengeance, Mr. Murphy," exclaimed the widow, re-entering the room at this critical moment, and precipitating herself between the would-be combatants; "and very pretty treatment of the young masther's friend, I'm sure."

"He's got a knife," said Dick, abashed and apologetically.

"And quite right too, when he has to deal with a mad dog. Did Masther Frank give you orders to beat the lad?"

"No," said Dick humbly, and resuming his seat. "I was wrong. I'm sorry."

"Not half so sorry as you would have been had you laid a finger on me," cried Chesney boldly.

"Tush, tush, put the steel by, lad," whispered the widow. "Dick has not had his whiskey this morning, and is not himself. Come, let me show you your room."

Robert Chesney picked up his bundle and followed her without even bestowing a glance at his late antagonist.

"You mustn't mind Dick," said she, confidentially, on their way up-stairs: "if anybody else had offered to hurt *you*, he'd have flown at them just the same. Here's your sleeping-room, which is but small; but if you want anything, you have only to name it."

"I should like some ink, if you please," said the lad; "that's all."

"Ink?" answered the widow admiringly. "What! you can write, can you? Why, Dick couldn't write his name to save his life!"

"Pen and paper I have in my bundle," observed Chesney; "it's only ink I want, and the favour of getting my note posted when I've written it."

"I thought from the first he was one of the quality," murmured Widow Mulvaney, as she went down-stairs: "his hair curled so, and he was so soft-spoken, and now he is for writing notes. I wonder whether it will be to his mother, poor lad. He ain't one of our own boys, who fall in love before they are short-coated, or I should say, since he is in such haste, that it must needs be to his sweetheart."

Weary and travel-stained as he looked, Robert Chesney was indeed a well-favoured youth, very different from the majority of customers with whom Mrs. Mulvaney was wont to deal. Though humbly born and rudely bred, he had had the advantage of

a good schooling, and took a pride in his personal appearance unusual with those of his own age and position in life. But for the circumstances of a drunken step-father and an unhappy home, he might have risen from being the head pupil of a national school to any pinnacle of parochial greatness; but domestic injustice and tyranny had warped a mind naturally sensitive enough to the claims of authority, and set his feet on a far different path. Of kindness, to which he was but little used, he was very susceptible, and Kavanagh's words and manner had won his heart, at a time peculiarly opportune for making a pact of friendship. Unimpulsive himself, he had been attracted by the other's reckless confidence to a degree that astonished him, as he now reviewed in quiet the stirring events of the past night. It was satisfactory, of course, that within a few hours from his voluntary exile from his step-father's roof, he should have found a helpful friend, a temporary home; and possibly a career for the future: but what price might he not have to pay for these undoubted advantages? Nay, what price might he not have already paid for them? He had been seen by many in company with one who, even by his own account, had incurred the highest penalty of the law. He did not for a moment believe him to be guilty in a moral sense; his own experience

of life, which had somehow placed the sense of justice in opposition to obedience to authority, inclined him to take this view; while Kavanagh himself, independent of his disclaimer, impressed him as being quite incapable of an atrocity; but still his fortunes had evidently become linked with that of a dangerous and desperate man. The measure of precaution that had been taken to insure his new friend's escape from his pursuers, was, to say the least of it, a strong one. If Murphy had not prevented him, he, for his part, it is true, would have given warning of their danger to the hapless patrol, who, for all he knew, had met with their deaths from the fallen tree; but he had not done so, and he was now the willing companion of those who had caused the catastrophe. For all that he had run away from home with nothing beyond what he carried on his back, and with very hazy notions of gaining a livelihood, Robert Chesney was a sensible English lad, who looked matters in the face even when they were serious.

As to breaking the word he had passed to Kavanagh, to keep silence upon his late adventure, that never entered into his mind; but he did ponder with precocious gravity upon the advisability of cutting his new connections altogether. Murphy was abhorrent to him, of course—a brutal copy of

his own drunken step-father; but there was this difference: from early association, his relative by marriage had obtained a certain ascendancy over him; until quite recently, indeed, he had never even resisted his correction; but as for *this* hulking savage (his thoughts were pregnant with unsavoury epithets for him), he did not fear him one whit. His society—so much of it, at least, as would be necessary for him to endure—would, doubtless, be distasteful to him; but his pride revolted against making this a very important item in his calculations. And, on the other hand, he had taken something more than a fancy for Murphy's master. Robert had met with gentlemen, and very grand ones, in his time—magnates of his own and other countries, who had shot in the royal park, under his step-father's guidance, and for whom he had acted as beater or game-bearer; but he had never seen so kindly a face, never heard such gentle tones, as those of Frank Kavanagh. No doubt, the kindness and gentleness had gained by contrast with the moodiness, and even ferocity, he had also exhibited: the self-willed and passionate man has always that advantage over his more equable fellows, that when he does make himself agreeable, it is all the more appreciated, like a clump of trees on a bare moor; and Kavanagh had showed his genial

side only to the boy, his rougher attributes to others. Moreover, he had trusted to his word, just as though he had been a gentleman instead of a poor lad, and that in a matter of the gravest sort. It was a rash and reckless thing to have done in so serious a case, and on so short an acquaintance-ship, as the boy himself could well understand; and this endeared his new friend to him all the more. Lastly, to have his vague plan for the future fashioned for him into some practical shape, would have been very welcome, even had it taken a less attractive guise; and this suggestion of leaving England and seeking his fortune in some far-away region, exactly chimed in with his own longings. But perhaps what, more than aught else, finally decided Robert Chesney to accept, on reflection, the proposal which he had so hastily embraced, was this trifling circumstance: as he stood in the national attitude for reflection, with one hand scratching his head, and the other thrust into his breeches-pocket, the jingle of golden coin fell upon his ear. With the rattle of copper he was familiar, with the chink of silver even he had some acquaintance; but to rub one piece of gold against another had never yet fallen within his own experience. He pulled out the two sovereigns which his patron had given him to make merry with, and gazed on them as an

Esquimaux gazes on a clasp-knife, or an Otaheitan woman on a looking-glass.

Hope is cheerful, and ambition is seductive; but the possession of ready-money in the unaccustomed hand, is the realization of man's brightest dream.

CHAPTER IV.

A Love Letter.

Two golden sovereigns to make merry with! He had slipped them into his pocket, taking them for shillings, his attention—to do him justice—being occupied at the time with bidding adieu to the donor; and he had not thought of them since. How profitable should that service be in which such a sum was bestowed as the means of mere amusement! And yet Robert Chesney's mind was not a grasping one, nor even unduly set upon what is miscalled "the main chance"—as though that could be "chance" which every man may acquire for himself, if he be prudent or roguish enough; or as if that chance were "the main" one in which self is alone concerned! No, it was not on his own account that his heart leaped within him at the sight of that golden store, but because it reminded him of one with whom he could instantly share it.

He untied his little bundle, and took from it pen and paper; and standing beside the mantelpiece—for the attic did not boast a table—wrote, in a good clerkly hand—Mistress Mulvaney having

kept her word as to the ink-bottle—the following letter:

MY DARLING LIZZY—Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon. I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at, since he has reasons for its concealment—and I am in hopes he will put me in the way of making my living. I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so; and, besides, whether I shall be here even to-morrow is more than doubtful. You are too sensible, I know, to fret, when I tell you that I am going abroad—an uncertain word, you will say, and yet I have nothing to tell you more distinctly—a great way off, my darling—beyond seas. Well, that was my own wish, you know. Step-father was seldom right in word or deed as respected me, but he spoke truth (I feel) when he used to say that England was no place for a young fellow who would make his way in the world quickly; and I have the sweetest reason—have I not?—to make it quickly. I shall write to you whenever I can. I shall think of you always—of the long summer days (that seemed so short) which we have spent together in the forest glades; I see them now

in this place, where there is not a tree; I see the beech-wood by our lodge, with your red cloak glinting through their silver stems; I see the mighty elm in front of your cottage door, nodding to me, as though in farewell. I do not write thus to pain you, you may be sure, but to convince you that I am still with you in my thoughts. Enough of myself. I conclude nothing has occurred within these few hours to you, though so much has happened to me. It was a comfort to remember that the wind would blow the elm away from your roof, not on it. You will be talking of nothing but the gale to-day—I mean your mother and James will be doing so. Then, about eleven (it is only seven o'clock when I write this), step-father will come in with the news that I have left home. Then you will look surprised (little hypocrite!), and your mother will weep, I know. God bless her! I fear there are hard times approaching for her. James will never get your poor father's place, unless he is more careful: I know he is suspected of poaching. It seems hard, in a land where so much is inherited, to have been left nothing but a taste, in which we are forbidden to indulge. If any opening should occur for him where I am going, I will let him know. I need not tell *you* to credit nothing that step-father says of me; but see your mother is not misled: I should be

loath, indeed, to lose the good opinion of one who has been so kind to me. A time may come when I may repay it; and, Lizzy, darling, I believe it will. I noticed yesterday how thin her shawl was got: give her this sovereign, with my dear love, to buy her a warmer one this Christmas-tide. When she looks at it, she will remember me; and before the remembrance is worn out—who knows!—I may come home—I mean to *your* home—to remind her of myself in person. How did I get it? Well, never mind; it was honestly come by. And don't think that I need it. There has been already a drizzle of sovereigns upon me; and if it should come on to pour, in the tropics somewhere, I shall hold out my hat, turn up my umbrella (a palm-leaf) the wrong way, and get thoroughly soaked; then come back to England to be dried. Since you may like to know where I have kissed this paper, I make a mark: I already feel your lips there, and tremble. How grown you will be when I see you next! but you will never be more beautiful in my eyes, for that is impossible. I have got your sampler, with *Trust in me* upon it. I do; I will: and believe me always, for my part, your loving sweetheart,

ROBERT CHESNEY.

I promised to tell you everything—even if it should not be good news, as you have promised to

tell *me*. Well, my new friend has a companion, who is not pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow, with whom I may have some trouble; even he, however, has his good point—an unreasoning attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except in step-father's dog *Fang*.

Robert had the pen of a ready writer, but this note took him long to compose; he was permitted by the nature of the case to say so little about his own adventures; and when he wrote of Lizzy, he had a way of lingering lovingly over the words, and even (as we have seen) of kissing them, which prolonged the process. He had done at last, however; and having addressed the letter to "Lizzy Alston, Green Lane Gate, Windsor Park," was about to get it posted, when he found his door had been locked on the outside. There was no bell in the room; indeed, his habits did not lead him to look for such; and he began to shake the door-handle and kick the panel.

"Hush, hush, in Heaven's name!" said the landlady's voice through the keyhole.

"I will not hush," was the lad's angry reply; "I will not be locked in, as though I were a spy and a liar."

"Mr. Murphy has gone out, and I suppose taken

the key with him; he will be back soon, and shall open the door, I promise you. No honest lad shall be kept a prisoner in my house. In the mean time, what is it you want?"

"I want this letter posted."

"Very good. Put it under the door."

"Can I trust her?" thought Robert, hesitating.

"I will not deceive you, my good lad," continued she, guessing the cause of the delay: "I will put it into the box with my own hands." She took the letter, and went down-stairs with it at once; as she did so, her eyes lit on the superscription, and a smile spread over her good-natured face. "So he has a sweetheart, after all," she murmured. "What luck it is for her to have a lover as can write! It would be something, now that my poor dear Miles is with the saints, to have an ould letter or two in his own hand to keep by one; but I could never teach him even the capitals.—Lor, Mr. Murphy, how you frightened me! What is it?"

"Nothin', sweetheart; only, I want that letter;" and suiting the action to the word, Mr. Kavanagh's henchman snatched it from her, and retreated backwards, holding it behind him, into the smoking-room, from which he had suddenly emerged.

Mrs. Mulvaney's face grew two shades nearer scarlet than heretofore. "Bad scran to you, you

thief!" cried she, following him quickly into the room. "Give me up that letter. Sweetheart indeed! Your lips shall never touch Bridget Mulvaney's cheek again, if once you break that seal. I'll tell the young masther what a mane sneak of a foster-brother he has."

"Tush, tush! it's for his sake I do it, woman. Yon lad is new to us all, and we know nothin' of him. The masther's in trouble—sore trouble, that I dare not speak of, even to yourself. How much less, then, should I trust a gossoon like that?"

"How came you to trust him at all, then?" inquired the widow incredulously. "If he knows, he knows."

"He knows something, and is in a position to tell it, which is more than he should have been if I had had my way: but you know what the young masther is—if he takes a fancy to man or woman, all's out."

"I believe the lad is as true as steel."

"That's because you're a woman, and the young fellow is good-looking, like myself. Well, he may be steel, and yet, without knowing it, he may have written something here which would bring Frank Kavanagh to the gallows."

"The gallows!" cried the widow, with a shudder. "Is it as bad as that, Mr. Murphy? and not

a spy nor a gauger in all England to excuse the matter."

"That is so, Mistress Mulvaney; and you had best ask me no more questions. The point is this: though the lad up yonder knows nothing of the trouble, he knows of something that happened afterwards to a couple of dirty policemen that followed us on horseback."

"Ah, the blackguards!" ejaculated the widow; "bad luck to them."

"Well, they hadn't *good* luck, and that's a fact," said Murphy grimly; "and if the lad has chanced to mention it to his friends, they may put two and two together, and find out more than he has. Besides, in his pride at staying at a private hotel, he may have written *Mulvaney's* at the top of the note, and it's very particular to keep our whereabouts dark for the present."

"There's something in that," assented the widow, won over, perhaps, no less by this complimentary reference to her establishment, than by his arguments. "But you needn't have snatched the letter out of my hand like a footpad. Here; give it to me—for it's no more use to yourself than a mass-book to a monkey—and I'll read it out to you aloud."

"You'll promise to read every word of it?" said

Murphy, hesitating, and holding the letter high above his head; "and not to hide anything, out of softness for the lad."

"Yes, yes, I will," answered the widow impatiently. Perhaps she was not altogether sorry thus to satisfy her own curiosity as to the contents of the young fellow's love letter, under compulsion and without twinge of conscience; and Murphy put it into her hand.

"Begorra, there's money in the seal!" cried she; "and what a mane creature am I to meddle with it! He's sending his sweetheart a bit of gold, just as my Miles, when he was courting myself, once sent me half a sovereign on my birthday, only it was stolen in the post. 'MY DARLING LIZZY,' it begins, just as his did, saving my name was Bridget—Now, Murphy, if there's anything particularly sweet in it, you must look another way, plaze, while I read it out. Now, silence, and be aisy, sir." The last words had reference to a tender movement on the part of Mr. Murphy, who had stolen his arm round her buxom waist, under the pretence (somewhat transparent, considering that he could not read) of commanding a full view of the letter. It was curious to watch the rapid change from excess of anger to the height of good-humour in these late antagonists, and the mutual friendliness that had

taken the place of what had so lately threatened to be a very pretty quarrel.

Little did I think, when I bade you good-bye last night, that I should have great news to tell you so soon.

“There, didn’t I say he was going to tell, the sneaking spalpeen!” ejaculated Murphy.

I have met with a kind friend—whose name, for the present, you must be content to guess at—since he has reasons for its concealment.

“There, you see!” cried the widow triumphantly: “if you did say he was agoing to tell, Dick, you was a liar.”

“Well, any way, he’s set a woman to guess at it,” answered Murphy obstinately; “and that’s very nigh as bad as telling.”

I cannot even give you my present address, for he is not at hand to give me leave to do so.

“Come, what do you think of that, Murphy? Is he not the broth of a boy, and as true as I told you?”

“She’ll be coming after him, and find it out,” argued the other, doubtfully. “There was a Pagan woman as did that onst, from Palestine, as had no other address to go by beyond London. Nothing stops them.”

"Don't talk to me of your painted women, Mr. Murphy."

"Pagan, Misthress Mulvaney—Pagan," explained Dick, apologetically. "There's a song written about it, as the young masther sings."

"Then he ought to be ashamed of himself, and you for listening to him. Listen to *this*, sir, and learn a lesson in good behaviour from yon poor lad. How kindly he speaks of his Lizzy's mother as is old and poor." And she read the extract out approvingly.

"Sure, she isn't his mother-in-law *yet*," observed Mr. Murphy cunningly, "or he would not speak of her *that* way. Now, it's one of the many merits as would make *yourself* a blessing to any man, that your mother (rest her soul!) is with the saints, and——"

"Be quiet, Dick, with your flattery, and let me seal up the gold again, and put the poor lad's letter into the post."

"You are deceiving me, Bridget," cried Murphy, with sudden seriousness; "I can see it in your eye; you've not read out all he says."

"Well, it's just the postscript, Dick," explained the widow, with well-affected reluctance. "There's nothing about the masther in *that*, I do assure you."

"I'm the best judge of that, Misthress Mulvaney, and I'll just tear the letter up from top to toe, unless I hear it; so, there."

"Well, *I promised to tell you everything*, writes he."

"Ay, now it's coming!" said Murphy grimly; "them lads as has learned to write puts the main thing in their postscripts, like the girls themselves."

I promised to tell you everything, even if it should not be good news. Well, my new friend (that's the young master, you know) has a companion, who is not so pleasant—a sullen brute of a fellow (this is you, Murphy), with whom I may have some trouble.

"Begorra, that's like enough!" ejaculated Dick, with a great oath.

"Hush, hush, ye hathen!" said the widow rebukefully; "and only hear how he praises you afterwards."

"Even he, however, has his good point (there's for you)—an unreasoning attachment to his master, such as I have never seen, except—except ——"

"That's well, any ways," exclaimed Murphy, complacently; "and I'd like to know where he finds my equal in that respect."

Except in step-father's dog Fang.

"The impudent young blackguard! does he say

that?" exclaimed Murphy, scratching his shock head.

"Yes, indeed, he does, you omadhawn," answered the widow, laughing heartily; "and now you know what comes of prying into other folk's letters. It is you that have been listening to it all, and it's the listeners that never hear any good of themselves. Come, light me a candle, Mr. Fang, while I get the sealing-wax, and try to mend what never ought to have been broken."

Doubtless, Mrs. Mulvaney well knew the man with whom she was dealing, or she would have abstained from thus reminding him of Robert Chesney's sarcasm, even if she had not concealed it from him altogether; but the fact was, that Murphy was rather pleased than otherwise with the testimony that had been paid to the *one* virtue on which he plumed himself—his fidelity—though illustrated by so homely a metaphor, and regarded its author with no increase of disfavour on account of it, but rather the reverse. A proof of this was immediately forthcoming in his giving up the key of Robert's attic to the widow, and bidding her tell him that (with the exception of the public room) he was free of the house, though forbidden to place his foot outside the door. This was not a great range of liberty; but unable, notwith-

standing the fatigues of the previous night, to sleep, and tired of remaining in his own apartment, without the solace of a single book, the young fellow was glad enough to take advantage of it. Without being by any means afraid of the sturdy Irishman, he would not have sought his society had it been avoidable, and, on descending to the smoke-room, it was a relief to his mind to find it empty. The time, however, hung very heavily on his hands; he was used to the free air of the forest and an outdoor life, and the sense of confinement was almost unbearable. Mrs. Mulvaney's stock of literature was limited to a Prophetic Almanack, and a work of Catholic devotion in the Latin tongue; so that he had really nothing to do but watch the company in the coffee-room from behind the curtains of the glass-door. They were a motley crew, and ranged from the mechanic in the receipt of good wages, down to the linenless wight who was spending his last copper in a go of whiskey, but they were all of one type—that of Working (or pretending-to-work) Irish. They all seemed to know one another, and to be known to Mrs. Mulvaney, who served them with her own hands, and had a word of friendly greeting for each of them.

She brought in Robert's own dinner at midday, but she did not dine with him; doubtless, Murphy

had laid injunctions on her to the contrary. Later in the day, however, the former made his appearance, and, without any allusion to their previous disagreement, informed Chesney that he had seen Mr. Kavanagh, who had made an appointment for them both to visit him on the ensuing day. Then Mrs. Mulvaney joined them, and talked to Murphy about "the boys," whom, at first, Robert took to mean her children, but afterwards understood to be certain grown-up habitués of the establishment who had come under his own notice that day. In the evening, some of them returned, and were spoken with apart by Murphy; they were all of the more poverty-stricken class, and seemed to regard that gentleman with great respect, and receive what he had to say to them with assent and gratitude. About eight o'clock a curious incident happened. Murphy, Mrs. Mulvaney, and Robert were sitting at supper in the little room, when the hoarse voice of a broadsheet seller was heard in the street.

"There's news of some sort," observed the widow. "Listen!"

"It's nothing," said Murphy roughly, and making an unnecessary clatter with his knife and fork. "These fellows always tell a parcel of lies. If you were to buy his paper, it would be only money thrown away; there would be nothing in it."

"Still, it can cost nothing to listen," argued the widow. "It's Murder. Hark!"

Her warning was unnecessary, for, urged either by an instinct of imitation, or by a curiosity that overwhelmed all other considerations, Murphy himself was now straining his ears to catch the fragmentary news.

"Horrible murder—murder in Buckinghamshire—murder and 'cide—horseback—mounted policemen."

"What is it?" inquired Robert, rising eagerly from his chair. His ears were unused to the sing-song style of the street newsman, but the first words and the last had fallen on them distinctly enough.

"It is murder and suicide," said the widow; "but there was also something about folks on horseback. Here are some coppers: run out, my lad, and buy a copy."

"Give them to me, and I'll buy it," said Murphy, snatching at the money: "a boy like that is sure to be made to pay twice as much as it is worth;" and he went out accordingly.

CHAPTER V.

Two Hundred Pounds Reward.

It was some minutes before Mr. Murphy returned, and when he did so, it was without the broadsheet, for which he said the man had charged such an exorbitant sum, that he refused to give it. At this, Mrs. Mulvaney grumbled, observing, justly enough, that the extravagance would not have affected Mr. Murphy's purse, but her own, while the broadsheet would have been a very entertaining piece of literature with which to beguile the evening. However, the very first thing in the morning she would buy the newspaper, where the authentic account of the transaction would be duly chronicled.

"That's if it ever occurred at all, Mrs. Mulvaney," said Murphy, with a short laugh, "which is more than doubtful;" and at the same time Robert felt a significant pressure on his foot, as though a broad-wheeled waggon was passing over his toe, which certainly did not emanate from the lady of the house. The conversation here took another turn, and settled upon a subject very frequently discussed under that roof, namely, emigration. Many an Irish

lad who left London for the Far West, or the still further antipodes, had taken his last meal (and that not seldom gratis) at *Mulvaney's*, and poured his hopes and fears into the ears of the friendly widow. Of only a very small minority of these she had ever heard again, but what she had heard, had given her a favourable impression of "foreign parts," which was her somewhat indefinite geographical expression for all countries that were not England or Ireland. She had therefore been always an upholder of emigration; while Murphy, who held a strong opinion not only that Ireland was for the Irish, but for no one else, and especially the English, had always opposed it. On this occasion, however, to her great surprise, and perhaps not a little to her disappointment, for she rather enjoyed an assault of arms with Dick, since it always ended in an embracing of them, her arguments met with small opposition. He allowed that there might be cases—of convenience, he would not say of compulsion—when it would be beneficial to leave his native land, and allowed that it would be somewhat hard upon the outside world—the inhabitants of which he seemed to look upon, like the Chinese, as barbarians—if it should never have the advantage of being leavened by a few specimens of Irishmen. On the subject of the national excellences, as com-

pared with the merits of inferior races, it was indeed impossible that there should be disagreement between them; but these were little matters of detail on which they differed just sufficiently to give piquancy to the conversation. Mrs. Mulvaney was of opinion that Irish folks should make their way in the world like other people, but this view Murphy strongly combated. There were certain chiefs of that noble race, such as the young master, who had a natural right to land and goods, independently of inheritance—this was not quite clearly explained, but somehow “the blood did it”—and again it was only natural that such as acknowledged the authority of the said chieftains should look to them for support. Robert Chesney, though a good scholar of the village-school pattern, knew nothing of political economy, and yet these opinions of Mr. Murphy sounded hollow, or, at least, as though there was but little in them; but it was astonishing with what fire and fervour they were advocated. Every glass of whiskey that Mr. Murphy swallowed—and he swallowed a good many—seemed to strengthen his conviction, though by no means to assist him in expressing it with perspicuity. If anybody had contradicted him, matters might have been very different, but as it was, he was affable and friendly. Every now and then he would wink at Robert with a sagacity that seemed

the concentration of all the sense that remained in him, and which left him poor indeed.

"Come, Mr. Murphy, you have had enough," said the widow presently. "Nay" — for he had made a snatch at the spirit-bottle, but not being in a condition favourable for the calculation of distance, missed it—"I am mistress here; and though I can't send you to bed like a child, though you are no wiser than a child, and deserve to be whipped, you shall have no more to drink;" with which she tucked the bottle under her arm, and triumphantly marched off.

"She thinks I'm dhrunk," observed Mr. Murphy confidentially, and winking more sagaciously than ever at his young friend.

"I confess I"—Robert was about to add that he himself had rather leaned to that opinion, when the other interrupted him impatiently:

"Tchut, lad; do you take Dick Murphy for a fool, that he should get dhrunk when he had a saycret to keep, and with a woman as he's sweet on in the room! No, no; it is not a few glasses of such poor stuff as that as could hurt me. I wanted to put her off the scent, that's all. She'll be thinking half the night, d'ye see, whether I've put my candle out, or under the bed, and wonder whether the house is on fire, instead of concerning herself about

our affairs. If she had got hold of that broadsheet, there might have been the deuce to pay. Them patrols are dead, lad."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Robert, greatly shocked. "And was that what the man was hallooing about?"

"Of course it was; and he was calling it *murder*, too; mind that."

"It was a cruel and infamous act, anyway," said the boy excitedly, "that putting the tree across the road, just after yourself had been saved from the same peril, and I am glad I had no part in it."

"Oh, *that's* your game, is it?" cried the other grimly. "You think you are free of it, do you, while others have to pay the shot? Well, let me tell you, you're most infernally mistaken there. We're all in the same boat, we three. You're what they call an accessory after the fact. They've got your name in it all regular."

"My name!" ejaculated Robert, in horror, his thoughts instantly flying to the cottage in the forest, and picturing Lizzy's face when she should come to hear such tidings of her lover. "But no; that is impossible: you are lying to me."

"Don't you use such hard words, my young fighting-cock, or you will get hard blows in answer," said Murphy menacingly. "If they haven't

got your name, they've got your description as like as life. If the gallows bear fruit at all, it will bear three: two goodly Irish apples, that's me and the young masther (which the saints forbid!), and one little English crab, which is yourself. So, what I say is, be careful; lie snug as a mouse, and open your lips to nobody about what happened last night till you have put a thousand miles of salt sea between you and English land."

Murphy waited for a moment, as if expecting a reply, but receiving none, gave a surly nod of his head by way of "good-night," and marched, not very steadily, out of the room. Robert listened mechanically to his heavy footsteps as they staggered up-stairs, and to the violent closing of his bed-room door. The news he had just heard had deprived him not only of speech, but of the power of rational reflection. Unlikely—impossible, indeed—as it was that he should be thus fatally associated, and above all so soon, with his companions of a few hours, he did not doubt it in the least; and the shock was overwhelming. Here seemed an end to all the bright prospects that he had so fondly pictured to himself, since he was to begin life, if not as a felon, still (what was as bad in the result) under the imputation of being one. If his name had really been mentioned—and here the ingenious

Mr. Murphy (through ignorance of the fanciful value which some people put upon their reputations) had been within a very little of precipitating the very catastrophe he would have averted—Robert would perhaps have gone straight to the nearest police-station and given himself up, the better to clear himself hereafter. But since it was only his description that was thus advertised, might it not be well to take this ruffian's advice, and leave the country so soon as opportunity offered? Ignorant of all the methods of criminal procedure as he was, it struck him that if he could once escape from the clutches of the law, he would be safe; he was rapidly growing out of the boy, and in a few years recognition of his person—if only his name should not transpire—would be impossible. He was innocent, it is true; but it might be difficult to prove himself so, and especially without compromising his companions. To be sure, it was only Murphy that was really guilty of the crime in question; but he had passed his word to be silent concerning the night's doings, and, if possible, he would keep it. Any disclosure of them would moreover implicate Mr. Kavanagh in that former proceeding—he did not know what it was, but could not but conclude that it was some transgression of the law—which had led up to the present catastrophe, and

his feelings towards that gentleman were very warm and grateful. Upon the whole, therefore, and after long pondering, he decided to take Murphy's advice, though perfectly well aware that it had been dictated by the most unblushing selfishness; and somewhat relieved by having come to this conclusion, he dragged his weary limbs to bed and slept as only the young can sleep when trouble sits by the pillow.

With the first light of dawn, however, he awoke (not of himself, as it turned out, but probably at the opening of the street-door), and hearing a heavy footfall in the silent street, cautiously put aside the window-blind, and looked out. His first idea, rechaufféed from what his imagination had fed upon the previous night, was that it was a policeman, for even rural officers of justice, with whom, of course, he was alone familiar, affect that pompous and measured tread, which, however assuring to the householder, is certainly premonitory to the thief; but it was not a policeman, and indeed might be said to be somebody very much the reverse, for it was Mr. Richard Murphy. This gentleman, to whom the *vin ordinaire* of his native country might not only be said to be meat, drink, and clothing (for while imbibing it, he felt the lack of none of them), but also sleep, was standing in front of the house, with a smiling countenance, and *wiping his*

mouth with the back of his hand. The morning was damp, and there was a slight drizzle falling, which perhaps was welcome to him, as reminding him of the weather in his native clime; at all events, it did not disturb him: he looked up the street and down the street with cheerful serenity, and was just about to add his contribution to the incense-breathing morn, by lighting a short black dudheen, when the onlooker saw his countenance fall, his tobacco-pouch drop from his hand, and the whole aspect of the man alter as suddenly and for the worse as though he had been shot in the stomach. Following the direction of his staring eyes, Robert beheld an announcement on the dead-wall opposite, which in his turn made him shudder from head to foot: *Murder — Two Hundred Pounds Reward — Frank Kavanagh.* These words were in large capitals; and before he could make out the rest of what was printed in smaller type, Murphy had rushed across the street, plucked the notice from the wall, and was tearing it to fragments. So fierce and vehement was the action, that Robert involuntarily compared it, in his own mind, with the rage and fury of some wild beast whose young is threatened; and as he did so, he saw Murphy look quickly up at his window; it would have been easy to have dropped the corner of the blind, but some fascina-

tion forbade him to do so, and in an instant their eyes had met. Such a tigerish look came into Murphy's face, and so suddenly, as though bent upon some instant violence, did he rush indoors, that the boy took up the only weapon that was at hand, the poker, convinced that within the next minute he would have to defend his life. This necessity, however, did not arrive. Murphy remained below, doubtless persuaded to do so by Mrs. Mulvaney, whose voice, raised in passionate expostulation, could be distinctly heard. It was she, indeed, who had pointed out the notice to Dick's attention, or, unacquainted as he was with the art of reading, he would have remained in blissful ignorance of its existence, or concluded it to be a mere embellishment of the wall! And now it seemed she was impressing on him the futility, if not the wickedness, of endeavouring to make matters safe by proceeding to some fatal extremity. Robert discovered this by the simple method of opening his bed-room door and listening to the conversation, which, under the circumstances, he might well be excused for doing.

"He knows too much," urged Murphy, with a growl like that of a wild beast ("And how like some wild beast," thought Robert, "such as the hunting-tiger, trained, but not tamed by man, of

which he had heard tell, this Murphy was!")); "he knows enough to hang us."

"No, no," rejoined the widow; then added something the listener could not catch, but which seemed to carry weight with it. "Moreover," she continued, in tones still hushed, but not inaudible, "you are not in your own land, remember; and by adding a new crime to the other, you will only increase the danger to the young master. You are out of your mind, Dick—and it isn't far you have to go for that—or I would say, besides, that none but a villain would think of murdering a poor lad like that because of a groundless suspicion of his fidelity."

"Murthering! Mrs. Mulvaney; you're joking," returned Murphy, in tones of apparent good-humour. "I was only going to put the innocent young fellow out of the risk of temptation. Two hundred pounds reward is a considerable attraction, and especially to one who wants to marry and set up housekeeping."

"You ought to be ashamed to say so," answered the widow, evidently resisting some personal attentions of her variable swain: "any one who is really in love with a young woman is the last person to entertain thoughts of treachery; though, if he is only pretending to be so—— Now, be aisy, and keep off, Mr. Murphy."

It was clear all danger to himself, for the pre-

sent at least, was over; and Robert discreetly closed his door, and left the loving pair to conclude their love-passages without an eavesdropper. It was, indeed, with some little embarrassment that he presently descended into the sitting-room, to meet the man who, he had every reason to believe, had, but half an hour before, entertained the design of cutting his throat; but it was without fear. Boy as he was, he was far from being easily frightened. His nature was that of the typical Englishman, sound and wholesome; his intelligence was straightforward, without much imagination; and the outdoor life he had lived in the forest, both by night and day, had strengthened what had originally been far from sensitive nerves; moreover, he felt within himself a certain superiority over this wild, untutored savage that almost amounted to contempt. The other, however, had the advantage over him in one point. Whether from native cunning, or from some extraordinary shallowness of feeling, which permitted the most violent ebullitions of passion to pass away in a few minutes, and leave no trace, Mr. Murphy seemed now entirely at his ease, and bade his young friend "Good-morning!" in a tone that was almost genial. Mrs. Mulvaney was as kind in her manner as ever, but was evidently depressed. Instead of being talkative as usual, she busied herself

in preparing their breakfast, without a word; and sometimes, as though wrapt in thought, did not reply even when Murphy addressed her. In speaking of their proposed visit to Herne Street that morning, Dick observed: "And unless you come with us—which, I suppose, can hardly be, mistress—you will scarce see the young master yourself, before he sails."

"I suppose not," answered the widow coldly.

"Not but that he would come here himself, if it were safe, and bid you good-bye in person, you may be sure," said Dick soothingly.

It was evident that he had mistaken the cause of her indifference, for she added sharply, "I don't wish to see him, Mr. Murphy, either here or elsewhere; but least of all in my own house."

"And you say that, who were born within the shadow of the ould master's roof-tree, and have had bread from his hand!"

"Yes," cried the widow firmly, "I do say it. I wash my hands of him; and I wish he could wash his of"—

"Silence, woman!" ejaculated Murphy, with a savage oath. "Stop that glib tongue of yours; unless, indeed," added he bitterly, "you wish to get the blood-money. Perhaps it is *that* which has

made such a change in Bridget Mulvaney. English air by itself could never have done it."

The widow's eyes flashed fire: it evidently cost her a great effort to stifle her feelings, and forbear from some cutting reply, but she succeeded. "I am not going to argue with you, Richard Murphy, or rather with the devil that is in you. I only warn you, for your own sake and for another's, not to be so free of speech to your foes as you have been this day to one who was onst your friend." With that she rose from her chair, not without some dignity, and keeping a calm, contemptuous face opposed to his scowling looks, walked slowly out of the room. At this, Mr. Murphy's features became suddenly chopfallen. and he fell to scratching his head.

"A woman is a curious creature, lad, as you will find out for yourself some day," observed he to his remaining companion. "Now, one would almost think, if one did not know her, that Mrs. Mulvaney yonder was downright vexed."

Not having the advantage of a long acquaintance with the lady in question, Robert confessed that that impression had been produced upon his own mind.

"But she wasn't, though; or if she was, it's over by this time," explained the other. "I own it was

wrong in me to use such hard words, but a squeeze of her hand, or at most a chuck under the chin, will make her all right."

Notwithstanding this confident speech, however, Mr. Murphy did not attempt either of these experiments, nor, indeed, had he the opportunity of doing so, for when, after some hesitation, he ventured very gently to ring the bell, it was answered, not, as usual, by the widow, but by the maid-of-all-work, who quietly proceeded to remove the breakfast things.

"Missis' compliments," said she, "and if you should plaze to want anything, it is *me* as is to get it for you."

At this, Mr. Murphy looked rather thoughtful for a minute or two, and then, with the air of a man who has made up his mind on an important subject, chucked *her* under the chin, and bade her fetch the whiskey-bottle. "When love is denied to us, lad," observed he with pathos, "there is nothing for it but to take to what is better—liquor."

He took to it till about noon, and then informed his companion that the time had come to keep their appointment with the young master. Robert professed his readiness to accompany

him; but when Murphy took his arm and would have passed it through his own, the lad drew back.

"I am no man's prisoner," said he haughtily, "and I either walk in freedom, or not at all."

Murphy gave him one of his ugly looks, but perhaps reflecting that there was no time to spare just then for having a quarrel out (a pleasure which can always be postponed), he permitted him to have his way as far as the nearest cab-stand, when he called a vehicle, and ordered the man to drive to Herne Street.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Wilson.

HERNE STREET is one of those short streets which run from the Strand to the river, and, like most of its fellows, has a disused and melancholy air. There is little or no traffic in it; there are no shops; it is composed wholly of lodging-houses, and a few mouldy-looking hotels. At the river-end of the street, the card "Apartments" no longer figures in the parlour-windows; but on each side of the doors, which usually stand open, are painted the names of the different tenants, the houses being let in flats. At one of these doors the cab stopped and Murphy and his companion alighted. As they passed in without knocking, Robert's eye was at once attracted to the names, among which it naturally looked for that of Kavanagh; he was surprised to find it absent. They went up a stone staircase—very dirty, as common staircases are apt to be—and only stopped where the stairs stopped—at the third floor, and opposite a door with Mr.

Wilson painted on it. Murphy knocked, and a strange voice bade them come in.

Seated at a round table in a somewhat lofty room was a gray-haired old gentleman, pale, and with dark rings under his eyes, examining attentively a huge map spread out before him. So absorbed was he in this task, that he did but give a single glance towards his visitors, and then motioning with his hand towards a couple of chairs, resumed his occupation. Robert was not sorry for this, because it enabled him to at once indulge his curiosity, which was greatly excited by the contents of the apartment, in which everything was strange to him, with the trifling exception of the smell of spirits, with which the habits of his step-father—even before his stay at Mrs. Mulvaney's—had made him tolerably familiar. Considering that it was at the top of the house, the room was a lofty one, and hung from floor to ceiling with pictures; some of these were on canvas, though only one or two were framed, but the majority were on paper, pinned to the wall. The furniture consisted partly of pictures also, which, in various degrees of completion, lay about the chairs and tables, and even on the floor; a curious machine, which he rightly concluded to be a painter's easel, though he had never before seen one, occupied a prominent place; and in two

of the corners were life-size figures in armour, standing sentry-like over all this disarray. There was no carpet, nor even, to Robert's eyes—which were not exacting in that respect—much sign of comfort in the place at all; but the pictures and the armour attracted him mightily, as also did the stirring scene that presented itself outside the windows. These looked down immediately on the river, on which the noonday sun was shining, and on whose dusky, but sparkling bosom, a score of steamers and other craft were making their way with more or less of speed. He knew it for the Thames, else it would have been hard indeed to have identified the river, with whose grassy banks and gleaming shallows he was so well acquainted, with this bustling and crowded stream. His own circumstances seemed to offer a parallel to it; for was it not difficult to recognize in himself, now launched on the great tide of life, and already in such strange company, the boy of four-and-twenty hours ago, who had had no knowledge of the world beyond the simple life of the forest and what he had read in books. As he mused thus, Murphy called to him sharply, "Don't you hear Mr. Denton speak to you, or are you bent on making him say everything twice over, and him so weak and ill, you omadhawn?"

Without bestowing a glance on Murphy, Robert

respectfully apologized to the old gentleman for his inattention, and, in obedience to a sign from him, drew near his table.

"So you have quite made up your mind, I hear, young man," said the stranger feebly, "to leave this country, and take your chance with your new employer?"

"With Mr. Kavanagh—yes, sir."

"Be aisy, you fool," growled Murphy, "and leave gentleman's names for themselves and their friends to use them."

"Hush, hush!" said the old gentleman, turning round upon Dick severely, "and don't *you* call people out of their names so freely. If I am not much mistaken in physiognomy, this lad is no more fool and omadhawn than yourself—and that is Mr. Frank's opinion.—The fact is, Robert Chesney, that just now Mr. Kavanagh has reason to conceal his name, and it's better not to mention it. Indeed, he is at present concealing *himself*, and that is why I am appointed his substitute to speak with you this morning. You see this map—here is England, look you, and there, on the other side of the world, is Australia. It takes months to go thither, and months to return—if one ever does return"—

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted Robert,

"but I have thought of all that, and if so be as Mr."—

"Let us say Mr. Frank only, or perhaps Mr. Wilson would be better still," suggested the old gentleman with a smile.

"Very good, sir. Then, if Mr. Wilson is still of the same mind towards me as before, I do assure you I shall not go back from *my* word. I am quite ready to go with him to Australia, or anywhere else, and make myself useful in the way that was agreed upon. But I should like to tell some one—I mean I should wish to write before I start to some one"—

"Be quiet, Murphy," cried Mr. Denton, in answer to a growl of remonstrance from that gentleman: "how *can* you make me raise my voice, when you know I am so unfitted to do so. The lad thoroughly understands he is to mention no names, and that is sufficient.—Yes, you may write of course, and tell her—for it is a 'her,' I suppose, eh?—that if she writes by return of post, under cover to Mr. Denton, Lloyd Brothers, shipping-agent, Liverpool, you will get her reply before you start. Mr. Wilson has instructed me to supply you with an outfit for the voyage, which will be accomplished in an emigrant vessel, and I am to tell you not to be astonished if

he himself should not be on board of her. Murphy will be there, and myself, but"—

"What! is not Mr. Frank to go with us?" interrupted Robert. "Nay, sir, then that alters all; for I took service with *him*, and with no one else. There is no love lost between this man"—here he pointed over his shoulder to Murphy—"and myself; and though I am sure you are most kind and fair-spoken, I feel no call to go with you to the end of the earth, as I do with Mr. Kavanagh."

"That is well and boldly said, Robert," said Mr. Denton, smiling, "though it is not complimentary to me and Murphy. If you had been a little less hasty to express your sentiments, I should have added, that though Mr. Frank would not be on board the ship at starting, he would join it before it got to sea."

"That is quite another matter, sir," answered Robert simply; "and if it be so, I am at your service."

"Very good; then that is settled. I have just a few words to speak to Murphy; and meanwhile here is the newspaper"—

An exclamation in Irish here broke from Murphy's lips, but in unmistakable tones of alarm and horror,

"That man is afraid of my reading something in the paper about Mr. Frank," observed Robert contemptuously, his cheeks glowing scarlet with indignation. "He accused Mrs. Mulvaney this morning of wanting to sell his master to the police for the two hundred pounds reward that is offered, so that I suppose I ought not to feel aggrieved that he suspects me of the like baseness; but you may tell Mr. Frank that his secret is as safe with me as with yonder scowling Irishman. I did not approve of that deed which has brought his master into trouble; but I think there was some excuse for it, and, at all events, sooner than any harm should come to him through my means, I would cut my right hand off.—Put the newspaper in your pocket, sir, for if you were to offer it to me now, I would not read it, nor shall I do so if the opportunity should occur again to-morrow. I have my own opinion, as I have said, about the mischance to the patrol, which, after all, was more Murphy's doing than his master's; but I don't want to hear the worst made out of it, and of Mr. Frank, as is clear is done by their calling it *Wilful Murder!*"

"This lad must have Irish blood in his veins," cried the old gentleman, regarding him with admiration. "I can scarcely believe that one professing such meritorious sentiments can likewise

turn his hand to what is useful, and keep accounts. See, here is a long list of poor fellows who are going out with us to the antipodes, and who do not get their passage for nothing, and also a rough estimate of what their kits will come to. Sit down yonder, and add me up the total. — And in the mean time, Dick—for all this talking has knocked me up—do you get out the whiskey, and let us drink success to the *Star of Erin* and her voyage. In three days' time"—Here there was a knock at the door. Murphy ran to it, and turned the key, then looked at Mr. Denton significantly.

"It's Polly's knock," whispered the latter, rising excitedly; "I had wished to have been spared this."

"No matter; it will be a good test," returned the other encouragingly, in the same low tone. "Let her see you, if it be but for a minute or two, and then pass into the bed-room, and so out."

Here the knocking was repeated, and a female voice exclaimed through the key-hole plaintively, 'Let me in, Frank. I know you are there, for I hear your voice.'

"You are mistaken there, Miss Mary," observed Murphy, unlocking the door, and admitting the would-be visitor. "Mr. Wilson is out, and when he will return is very uncertain."

The new arrival was a young woman of con-

siderable beauty, small but exquisitely shaped, and whose keen blue eyes and lavish wealth of rich brown hair seemed to recall to Robert some familiar face. If that were so, the recognition did not appear to the mutual. "Who is *he*?" inquired the young woman, pointing without a trace of shyness at Chesney; then carrying her finger on towards Mr. Denton, "and *he*?"

"They are two of my master's friends, whom I had no particular orders to introduce to you, Miss Mary," answered Murphy.

"They are here by appointment, then, and waiting for him. Well, I shall wait for him too."

With that she unfastened the seal-skin cloak she wore, and sitting down with her back turned towards Murphy, put up her pretty feet upon the fender.

"You may stop, or go away, Miss Mary, just as you please"—

"Thank you," interrupted she with sharp contempt; "I shall take advantage of your gracious permission, and stop."

"Well, that can only end in disappointment, miss. Mr. Frank is away, miles away, and, as you have been already informed by his own hand, is not coming back again to-day, nor any day; so there."

"Is this true, gentlemen?" cried the girl, rising suddenly from her chair, and looking from one to the other appealingly. "I have no means of knowing whether this man is telling me truth or not, Heaven help me!"

As Mr. Denton did not even look towards her, but appeared more busily engaged with his map than ever, Robert thought himself called upon to reply. No man, with a heart in his bosom, looking on that pathetic, pleading face, could have refused to do so, and far less kind-hearted Robert Chesney, who, moreover, at once bethought him of one in the far-off forest glades, who might one day be praying for some longed-for news of him—in vain.

"Indeed, miss," said he tenderly, "I believe the man is telling you the truth. At least I came myself to-day to see Mr.—Mr. Wilson—and have failed in doing so. They told me he would not be here."

"And is it true—you are young and kind, and have an honest face; you would not tell me a lie, I feel—that Frank—that Mr. Wilson is going far away 'broad?"

"Indeed, miss, it is true."

At these words the little creature seemed to shrink within herself, and dropping into her seat

again, covered her eyes with her hands, to hide the tears that she could no longer restrain. Here Murphy touched Mr. Denton on the shoulder, and that gentleman rose at once, and passing softly but quickly across the floor, opened the bed-room door and closed it behind him. The next moment the outer door of the bed-chamber was heard to open and a rapid step to descend the stairs.

"That's him—that is Frank's footstep!" exclaimed the girl, starting to her feet, and rushing to the door.

"It is not. It is only Mr. Denton," observed Murphy coldly. She ran out, however, to satisfy herself of the fact by leaning over the banisters, and presently came back again, looking very tearful and excited.

"What have you done with him? Where is he?" asked she of Murphy. "If you will not tell me where he is, at least tell me *how* he is?"

"Oh, he's well enough, so far as that goes," answered Dick carelessly.

"He was *not* well when I saw him last, not looking like himself at all. He had some trouble on his mind—was going down upon some unpleasant business, he said, into the country; and that made him take to what is so bad for him, more than ever."

"Rubbish!" returned Murphy contemptuously. "If you mean whiskey, no Irishman was ever hurt

by whiskey yet. If you mean weakness of another sort—a foolish passion for your pretty face, that's over."

"You liar!" cried the girl, her moist eyes darting fire, her cheeks aflame; "you wicked, cruel liar!" Murphy laughed contemptuously. "*You* pretend to love him, *you!*" she went on, with bitterness. "It is you who are his worst enemy. You lead him on to drink. You flatter and encourage him whenever he is bent on what is wrong and dangerous. *You*—you will be his ruin!"

"Be quiet, vixen!" shouted Murphy. "Keep a civil tongue in your head.—You won't? Then just you walk out of this room, and take my word for it, that it is the last time you ever see the inside of it."

"I will not stir!" cried she defiantly. Robert knew her now; her face—generally resolute and scornful, as at present, but sometimes soft and pleading—was on half the pictures on the wall.

"Then I will put you out," said Murphy sternly. He advanced towards her, holding out his huge hand menacingly. The expression of his face was so grim and fierce that she quailed before it.

"O Frank, O Frank!" exclaimed she with a passionate cry, "why, why are you not here to strike him dead?"

The huge hand was almost on her wrist, and she,

like some graceful animal fascinated by beast or reptile, standing motionless, save for the trembling of her limbs, before him, when Robert suddenly bounded between them, and whirling her light form towards one of the mailed sentinels of the apartment, snatched out his sword from its rusty scabbard, and brandished it in Murphy's face. "I am not Mr. Frank, miss," cried he assuringly; "but I *will* strike him dead, if he lays a finger on you; and let me tell him that if his master is the man I take him for, he will have an account to settle with him, for threatening a young lady under his own roof—like you."

"A young lady!" echoed Murphy contemptuously; the allusion to his master doubtless checking the impulse he had at first entertained to rush in upon the lad, at all risks, and take summary vengeance on him for his interference. "A pretty sort of a young lady, truly, though scarcely worth your fighting for, if you knew all. And if it comes to telling, suppose *I* were to tell the masther, that the last time I saw Miss Mary she was cuddled up in your arms, like *that*. Come, there is no need for tale-bearing, nor for quarrelling neither." It was evident that Mr. Murphy very much repented of what he had done, or had threatened to do, and that he feared the consequences of it. His tones, though gruff, were con-

ciliatory; and his manner, like that of a bear asking for buns on the top of a pole, was embarrassed, but propitiatory.

"I am not more given to tale-bearing than yourself," said Robert, who had dropped his fair burden, not without a modest blush, at the other's innuendo; "nor do I seek a quarrel. But I won't stand by and see a woman ill-treated by any man; and she shall stay here as long as she likes, unless Mr. Frank gives orders to the contrary."

"*She* may stay, and *you* may stay, for all I care," replied Murphy carelessly; "but I have business elsewhere." With that, he left the room, and passed down-stairs as far as the front-door, but did not cross the threshold. His business was twofold—to see that Chesney did not leave the house without him, and that his master did not enter it while Miss Mary remained within.

In the mean time, Robert began to feel a little awkward. When a knight-errant of the good old times had preserved an innocent damsel from a giant, he made no more ado about putting her behind him on his horse's crupper, as his own lawful prize, than if she were a sack of corn. But this chivalrous lad had no horse; and his affections, as we are aware, were already bespoken by another young person.

"I am very, very much obliged to you," said

Miss Mary, forcing a smile, and holding out a pretty little hand. "I hope I may not be the cause of making that hateful man your enemy."

"Don't you trouble yourself about me," returned he good-naturedly; "the only thing that gives me sorrow is to see you so cast down and sad. As for that fellow Murphy, he was no friend of mine before."

"And yet you dared to anger him," said she gratefully, "to save me from insult—*me*, whom he would have you believe was a worthless, wicked girl! But though I am no young lady, as you called me, I am not *that*, indeed, sir."

Robert knew he was getting very red indeed. He was burning to express his conviction that Miss Mary was everything that she ought to be, but he couldn't get out a word.

"The fact is," continued his companion frankly, "I'm a model."

"Indeed!" said Robert simply, endeavouring not to appear surprised at this announcement, which, nevertheless, was a little unexpected. He had heard of a model of propriety, but he had never before seen one, and the reality fell short of his ideal.

"O yes; I'm *there*, and *there*, and *there*," she said, pointing to various pictures, in which her lively features had been reproduced with more or less of

success. "There was a time when Mr. Frank was never tired of painting me; but all that's over now, it seems."

She sighed so pitifully, that Robert would have given all he had to have been able to say a word of comfort; but he had none to give. Simple as he was, he guessed that the relation between his master and this fair young creature had been a tender one, and was now broken off for ever. "Is Mr. Frank a painter, then?" inquired he.

"Yes; an amateur one, at least. What! did you not know that? You cannot, then, have known him long."

"I met him for the first time," he was about to say, "the night before last," but he stopped himself; that might be saying too much, perhaps. This girl could scarcely be in Mr. Kavanagh's confidence, when she did not even know him by his real name, but called him Wilson. "I met him for the first time quite lately."

"And yet you must be intimate with him, to be admitted *here*," said she.

"I have been taken into his service, miss, and am going ab" —

"Going abroad with him, you were about to say," said the girl quickly. "His letter told me truth, then!" She was silent for a little; then sinking

her voice to a tone of deep feeling, went on, as though unconscious of her companion's presence: "Well, well! I have no right to hinder him; no claim, alas! to accompany him. He would have said 'Good-bye' with his own lips, I know, if he could have trusted himself to do so."

"He wished to spare you pain," suggested Robert sympathizingly.

"Ah, I see; he has wound himself into your heart already," replied she sadly. "Beware of him! Don't think I speak it in bitterness, and because he has deserted me; but take warning from one who knows him well, and loves him still, and whom it grieves to give it. Frank Wilson wears as kind a heart as yours; he has been kind to me—most kind—and treats me now as kindly as I deserve. But he is not himself at all times. Beware of him when his brow clouds, and his words flow free and fast; beware of him when the drink is in him, and Murphy is at his ear. He is mixed up with dangerous schemes; I know not what they are, but those who work them with him are low and villainous men, unlike himself—unlike, I trust, what you will ever be. I would go with him to-morrow to the end of the earth, if he would have me with him; but though I am blind upon my own account, I can see on yours. Again I say, beware of him.—Good-bye,

boy; and a thousand thanks." She held her hand out for the second time, which he took and pressed. Then giving one last look around the familiar walls, as though to bid them farewell, she left the room, and ran down-stairs.

CHAPTER VII.

In Charge.

WHILE Robert was still hesitating whether to remain where he was, alone, or to return to Mulvaney's, Murphy re-appeared, and bade him accompany him into the town to procure his outfit, for which Mr. Denton had provided the means. The warning which he had just received respecting the danger of the connection he was thus about to form, was still ringing in his ears, and had not been without its effect; it had manifestly been given out of gratitude to himself, and not at all with any desire to prejudice him against his would-be benefactor; and, moreover, the very fact of Kavanagh's having concealed his own name (as he had manifestly done) from one on such intimate relations with him as "Miss Mary" was no small a corroboration of her words. If he was "Mr. Wilson" to *her*, it was pretty certain that he had very valid reasons for adopting an alias as respected others; and an alias, as even Robert was aware, is not ordinarily used except by persons who are at odds with the

law of the land. On the other hand, from certain obscure hints, and more openly-expressed sentiments, which he had heard both from Murphy and Mrs. Mulvaney, he had reason to believe that the offences, if any, which Mr. Kavanagh had committed, were of a political character, connected with some discontented faction in Ireland; and he was not inclined to judge him harshly upon that account. To be a strong politician, one needs to be a wise man or a fool, and though Robert could not at present lay claim to the former designation, he was far removed from the latter. Moreover, he had taken a liking to Kavanagh, and personal attraction would have had force enough in his case (as it has with most men) to have overcome the repulsion of political disagreement, even had it existed. Lastly, but by no means least in weight, was the reflection, that if he should decline what good Fortune now offered to him, he might starve before the next turn of her wheel. He had absolutely no other means of livelihood, and the share he had already taken in Kavanagh's affairs might seriously affect his procuring any. In accepting this outfit at his hands, he felt he was taking the most decisive step that life had yet presented to him, and it might well give him pause. In the end, however, he did accept it; and what seemed to him a most ample

supply of clothes and other necessities into the bargain.

The sense of his having thus thrown in his lot with his new master seemed also to extend to his companion. Murphy's manner towards him at once changed for the better, and he became communicative, if not confidential. He informed him that Mr. Kavanagh was going to take a good many of "his people" with him to foreign parts, including some of "the boys" from Mulvaney's; and that these last were to be put for the present under Robert's personal supervision.

"Here is the money out of which you are to pay for their keep in town, and their passage to Liverpool, and for which you will be accountable to the young masther. And there are tools, such as emigrants use, and seeds to buy, and even ready-made houses, the estimates for which you will make out at home from papers that I shall give you."

If Murphy's master had been the most calculating man alive instead of the most impulsive, he could never have hit upon a better plan to insure the zeal and fidelity of his new adherent. To be trusted with money and the conduct of affairs was a compliment that a young man of Robert's character thoroughly appreciated; while his sim-

plicity did not permit him to perceive that the work thus provided for him at Mrs. Mulvaney's would have the effect of keeping him well employed and close within-doors. Indeed, when Murphy added a hint—very different from his former imperative injunctions—as to the inexpediency of appearing in public, his young companion took it in excellent part, and assured him that he considered his previous promise to keep himself concealed was still binding. From all which we may gather, that while Robert and “Miss Mary” were having their private interview above-stairs, Mr. Murphy had once more met Mr. Denton below, and had received from him instructions which had the same force as though they had come from the “young master” in person.

For the remainder of his stay at Mulvaney's, which extended for several days, Robert could no more complain of finding time heavy on his hands. The accounts which he had to deal with were really upon an extensive scale, and demanded his best attention, and when he was not engaged with them, the specimens of humanity placed under his control afforded him occupation of another sort. From the observations that he had formerly taken of these through the parlour-window, he had set them down as being at once both shy and suspi-

cious; but as soon as they understood from Murphy the powers that had been delegated to his young companion, they at once threw off that character, and towards himself at least became all artlessness and candour. From them, indeed, he learned far more of their own affairs, and of those of his employer, than perhaps the latter had bargained for. Mr. Frank Kavanagh was, it seemed, the proprietor of a large estate in Tipperary, and had been mixed up with certain illegal proceedings which these gentlemen euphoniously termed "the Troubles." He was beloved by his tenants, or, at all events, by the poorer portion of them; and having failed in some experiment he had attempted, or caused others to attempt, for their benefit—which Robert could not but suspect was no less than a revolution—was now assisting them to emigrate. He had, on the other hand, a younger brother, Louis, who was obnoxious to them; and of whom they never spoke without the preparatory ceremony of spitting on the floor. It was a shame and disgrace to the country, and indeed to the administration of the universe, that such things should be, but, somehow or other, Mr. Frank had been ousted from his property, or at all events a portion of it, by Mr. Louis, who was little better than a Sassenach, notwithstanding the good blood that ran in his veins,

but so it was; and now, disgusted with this side of the world, the young masther had resolved to push his fortune in the other. What that fortune might be, they did not care to speculate upon, so long as they were permitted to share it; while of the voyage before them, as well as of the place—Australia—to which they were bound, they had the most inaccurate notions.

To begin with, they believed that they would only be at sea for a day or two, and that the world was quite flat. Robert, on his part, told them what he knew respecting these matters, but they took very little interest in them. They were chiefly solicitous to learn where the young masther was, and what he was doing; about which he had no information to give them: he told them, however, that Mr. Kavanagh was not to be on board the ship at first, but would join them somewhere, after it had set sail; at which news they seemed to be as surprised as he had been himself, and somewhat cast down. Of his agent, Mr. Denton, they had not so much as heard, they said; but Murphy appeared to be a great favourite with them, and held in much respect, as being foster-brother to the young masther. Mrs. Mulvaney, too, was as good a soul as ever Ould Ireland, so prolific in excellent persons, had ever produced. It could not be denied

that Robert's new friends were grossly ignorant, devoted as much to liquor as to patriotism, dirty in their habits, dependent in their ideas, and so far affording as strong a contrast to his own character as could be imagined; but they had, nevertheless, some admirable qualities of their own, which made themselves at least equally apparent, and on the whole, he liked them very well. They were faithful, grateful, trustful, and, as is only possible with Irishmen, contrived somehow, without having anything to bestow, to exhibit an extraordinary generosity to one another. They were full of good-humour, too, and fun, the latter being sometimes of such an uproarious description as to demand the personal interference of the widow, who, on such occasions, did not hesitate to put it down, very literally, with the strong hand. To this domestic police they were submissive enough; and perhaps Mrs. Mulvaney's method of dealing with "these children of a larger growth" might have been, in some respects, imitated with advantage by some very superior authorities. Her behaviour towards Robert himself, though uniformly kind and pleasant, was not what it had been; nor was she on the same familiar footing with Murphy as before their quarrel. To the latter, indeed, her manner had become quite stiff and formal; while to Robert it was

only reticent, and not unmingled, as it struck him, with a sort of silent pity.

Whatever she may have had in her mind, however, respecting him or the service on which he had entered, she kept to herself; and when the morning came on which he left her roof—in charge of some half-dozen of “the boys”—for Liverpool, she kissed him (as she did all the rest), and bade him God-speed; and so they parted. There was, nevertheless, a certain doubtful trembling, in her honest voice, as she spoke that farewell, which did not escape Robert Chesney’s notice, and somehow recalled to him the warning that he had received in Herne Street, from lips more fair, but not more friendly. It was much too late, however, even if he had wished to do so, to recede from what he had undertaken now, and though the circumstance recurred to him afterwards, he forgot it in the incidents of the journey; while, on his arrival at Liverpool, where he reported himself at Lloyd Brothers, according to instructions, he found a letter awaiting him from Lizzy, the contents of which, together with the duties that devolved upon him with respect to the emigrants, gave him plenty of other occupation for his thoughts. Mrs. Alston, always in delicate health, had fallen ill, dangerously so, as he could read through poor Lizzy’s transparent ex-

pressions of hope — and there was bad news, in another way, of James. The latter was a somewhat morose-tempered lad, easily led where dissipation was in view, and of idle habits. Brought up to assist his father in his duties as game-keeper, he had contracted a taste for sport, which he was not now in a position to gratify without the most serious risks, though placed amid the greatest temptations to do so. Disappointed in the hope of succeeding to his father's post, and doing only occasional work for a neighbouring farmer, he lived on at the old place, where the hares started under his feet, and the pheasants whirred about his ears, with more spare time on his hands than was good for him, and not without acquaintances to point out how profitably he might spend it. In a word, he had taken to poaching, a pursuit which in his case could not long escape detection. Nay, by one person at least it had already been detected; and herein lay for Robert Chesney the bitterest news of all. The man who had discovered the crime was John Rowland, his own step-father, and the use he was making of his knowledge was to endeavour to win Lizzy for himself. Robert could see that, though Lizzy at present could not. She only spoke of Mr. Rowland's forbearance in having spared her brother for her sake, and of his unlooked-for forethought

in not having revealed the delinquency to her mother, upon whom such a discovery might just now have had fatal effects.

To be poor, alas! is often to be powerless, and Robert could do no more than warn the innocent girl against the wiles of one whom he himself knew far too well to believe capable of a disinterested act of benevolence. Lizzy's letter had indeed unwittingly corroborated for him certain suspicions of his step-father that had already rendered him uneasy upon her account, and which now went nigh to madden him. Rowland had always disliked him; but of late months his conduct had been so systematically cruel, that he had found it hard to explain it, save on one ground—that of jealousy; and it now occurred to him that his running away from home was the very object that this man had desired, and that his brutal behaviour might even have been in part assumed, in order to obtain that end.

Outraged, outwitted, but also a penniless out-cast, what could he do, beyond putting the unsuspecting girl upon her guard. When he went on board the ship, and found it crowded, not with men only, but their wives and daughters, how he longed to have had the means at his disposal to have offered the Alstons a passage to the New World; if he could have had his Lizzy with him, safe alike

from poverty and persecution, how light of heart, how strong of hope would he not have been! So enraptured, indeed, was he with this idea, that, forgetful of her mother's illness, and of the impossibility of the ship being delayed, if at that moment he could have seen his patron, he would have besought him, notwithstanding the obligation he felt himself already under to him, to assist him still further in this strait. But fortunately for his reputation for sanity, Mr. Frank was not at hand; Murphy even protested that he did not know where he was, and if so, it was certain that none else knew. His absence entailed upon Robert additional duties, which were so far welcome, that they prevented his mind from dwelling on its own sorrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

Outward Bound.

THERE were more than two hundred emigrants of both sexes and all ages, though mostly adults, on board the ship, and out of these about sixty came from Mr. Kavanagh's estate, and had their expenses wholly or in part defrayed by him. These were for the most part as ignorant and helpless as the contingent Robert had brought with him from town, and he had the supervision of them all; to supplement their too scanty outfits, or in the rare cases when they had a little money of their own, to restrain them from purchasing unnecessary articles, was only a small portion of his task, which extended from keeping their accounts to locating them in their respective berths. Mr. Denton was ill, much worse, to all appearance, than when Robert had met him in town, and was recommended by the doctors not to go on board until the last moment; and Murphy, from his ignorance, and bad example as respected indulgence in drink, was worse than useless as a coadjutor. One man only was of help to Robert—

a weather-beaten, wiry old fellow of sixty years of age or so, whom "the boys" called Mister Maguire. The "Maguire" was open to little question, but the reason of the "Mister" was by no means self-evident. Except that he had a more intelligent air, his appearance in no way differed from that of his fellow-emigrants; and he shared bunk and board with them in the steerage, and was treated in all respects like the rest. But among "the boys" themselves it was very different; he was evidently held by them in higher consideration than Murphy, notwithstanding that that gentleman enjoyed (as did Robert likewise) the privilege of a second-class berth, and his suggestions rarely failed to command obedience, even from the most unreasonable. His assistance, therefore, was invaluable to one whose delegated authority—in the absence of him who had bestowed it—would not otherwise, perhaps, have had much weight; and moreover, in matters relating to ship-board—of which, of course, Robert knew nothing—he was thoroughly at home: it was pretty certain, indeed, although he did not parade the fact, that at one time in his life, at least, Mr. Maguire had been a sailor. It was not till they had been at Liverpool a week that all was ready for sailing (for the ship being for emigrants only, awaited the convenience of her passengers), and Mr. Denton came

on board. He looked very white and ill, and was carried up the side on a sort of litter, and at once conveyed to his own cabin. That of Mr. Kavanagh still stood empty, and the only tidings of him were as vague as before—that he “would join them somewhere on the voyage.”

On a certain Saturday morning, the tide serving, and the wind being favourable, the anchor was weighed, and the ship set sail. A few minutes after she began to move, a large black boat shot out from one of the docks ahead of them, and pulled straight for the vessel.

“What is that?” asked Robert, who was standing on the forecastle, of Maguire, who stood beside him.

“That’s the police galley,” returned he with a crooked smile, which might, however, have been caused by his having his pipe in his mouth. “I only wish I was the steersman.”

“Why?” inquired Robert simply.

“Because, with this free wind and some unskilful handling of the wheel, there might be a lucky accident.”

It was impossible, from his sarcastic tone, as well as from the truculent expression of his eyes, to doubt that what Mr. Maguire intended to express

was that he would have run her down. Robert had seen enough of his new companions to feel small surprise at any enmity they might exhibit towards the police authorities, whether on land or sea; still, his companion's views in that quarter did seem a little "advanced," considering the smallness of the provocation for them.

"Is it unusual, then," asked he, "for the police to board vessels at the last moment? They don't mean any particular harm to us, I suppose?"

"I never heard of their meaning any particular good," returned the other grimly.

Robert himself began to feel uncomfortable: occupied with his own sorrows, and still more with his multifarious duties, he had almost forgotten the apprehensions under which he had laboured while at Mulvaney's, but at this moment all the incidents of that night in which he had first made acquaintance with his present patron recurred to him. Kavanagh, indeed, was not on board, but he himself and Murphy were, and it was more than possible that it was on their account that this unwelcome visit was about to be paid. Without absolutely wishing that Mister Maguire was at the wheel, he regarded the approach of the galley with considerable anxiety as it drew nearer and nearer. Presently, it reached the

ship; and a police inspector, accompanied by two men armed with pistol and cutlass, came on board. The captain was summoned, a written parchment handed to him; and then orders were given to slacken sail, and for all hands, except the women and children, to come on deck. The inspector, with the list of the passengers in his hand, first compared the numbers.

"There are two cabin passengers on the list," observed he curtly.

"There are so," replied the captain: "one is Mr. Denton, whom you will find below, ill in his cot; the other is Mr. Kavanagh, not come on board."

"That remains to be seen," said the inspector significantly. "I must search the ship, and then examine all here. See that no one leaves the deck. Where is this Mr. Denton?" An officer of the vessel accompanied the inspector and one policeman below; the crew and passengers remained where they were; the latter, for the most part, excited and alarmed, and watching the guardian of the law as sheep regard a dog, whose intentions, notwithstanding his office, they cannot persuade themselves are friendly. Some wore a more dismayed aspect, as though they had particular cause for misgivings on

their own account, and others, a more menacing, as fear or hate had the upper hand. Murphy and Maguire alone, who stood apart by the bulwarks, seemed to take the whole affair as one of course. Yet, from what the latter had just observed to him, Robert knew that this was far from being the case, at least as regarded Maguire; both had their eyes fixed earnestly on the after-deck; and a look of intense relief, as Robert fancied, came over their countenances, when presently the three men appeared upon it, after their examination of the cabins. The rest of the ship was next thoroughly searched, and then commenced a personal examination of the astonished passengers. This was proceeded with after a very extraordinary fashion: every man had to take off his cap, while the inspector carefully passed his hand over the front of the head. When he came to Chesney, to the lad's great relief, he did not delay a second; nor did "Mister Maguire" occupy much more of his attention: but he scrutinized Murphy very particularly. "Is it a lock of my hair you're afther, sir?" inquired that gentleman, in a tone of gratified vanity that convulsed his hearers; it was so unlike him to indulge in badinage with the constabulary, that it was clear to Robert that something had put him into high good humour. Some of the emigrants, on the other hand, were in-

clined to resent this liberty thus taken with the forelocks, and one of them warned the officer at his peril not to touch one hair of his head. But here, again, Murphy turned the matter into mirth, by observing: "Sure, Mike, and do you suppose the officer would do it if so be he hadn't got his gloves on?" Finally, the captain himself contributed his quota to the general amusement by taking off his cap and exhibiting a head almost entirely bald, which he begged to offer to the consideration of the examiner. The search having thus proved fruitless, the inspector and his myrmidons took their leave, and the vessel, which had slackened sail in obedience to his orders, resumed her course.

Though cold, the weather was clear and bright, and the sea-air and sunshine rapidly restored Robert Chesney's spirits. He had the utmost confidence in Lizzy's fidelity to himself; and since all had been done in putting her on her guard that could be done, what use was there in dwelling on what might after all be an imaginary trouble. So Youth, with its practical good sense, can reason, while Age, bowed by sad experience, carries the burden in anticipation. He had an exemption, too, from another sort of trouble, from which youth has by no means a universal immunity: he never felt seasick, except when his duties called him to visit his

charges in the steerage, which offered a scene that is, very literally, better imagined than described. Irishmen make good soldiers, but they are not good sailors—at least to begin with. Their wit died out of them, their sentimental regrets vanished; their pigs, their potatoes, their potheen, nay, patriotism itself, were all forgotten in the wretched excitement of that game of pitch-and-toss, in which their all, or what seemed their all, was lost twenty times a day. Even the absence of the young master was for the time no longer commented upon by his unhappy adherents. On the other hand, it began to disturb Robert very much. To them the assurance that Mr. Kavanagh would join them on the voyage, had been perfectly satisfactory; there were doubtless a dozen ports between Liverpool and Australia, at any one of which they might touch, and behold him on the quay. But to one whose geographical knowledge was more accurate, matters began to look very suspicious. If the recent visit of the officers of justice had been foreseen, it was easy to understand why Mr. Kavanagh had not put in an appearance; and Robert had judged it probable that he had embarked on board some fishing-smack, or other vessel, for the purpose of being picked up when the *Star of Erin* (as their own ship was named) had got some few

miles down the Channel. But as time went on, and they began to near the open sea, this expectation grew less and less, till it faded altogether. He would have insisted upon an explanation from Mr. Denton, but that that gentleman was reported to be mortally ill, and none but Murphy (out of whom he could get nothing but evasive replies) was admitted to his cabin. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to await as patiently as he could the course of events. He would certainly not have embarked on board the *Star of Erin* had he not believed that Mr. Kavanagh was to have accompanied him; but after all, he had had his passage paid to the New World, and was even in receipt of a small salary as general manager for his patron's clients. In this capacity, indeed, he enjoyed a considerable consideration, not only with the emigrants, but even with the captain himself. They had been at sea nearly a week, and were out of sight of land, when that gentleman, being engaged on deck one evening, happened to request Robert to fetch for him some article out of his cabin. To obey this request, it was necessary to pass the door of Mr. Denton's berth, and as he did so, he was surprised to hear from within it the sound of uproarious laughter. It was Murphy's laugh to be sure, but it seemed strange that even Murphy should indulge

in such hilarity at the bed-side of one supposed to be dangerously ill. On his return, not only was the sound renewed, but the cabin-door opened just as he was about to pass it, and out came both Murphy and Maguire, the former evidently in the highest spirits, the latter cold and quiet-looking as usual.

"I am glad Mr. Denton is better," observed Robert significantly. "I hope there is now no reason why I should be denied admittance to him?"

"He's ill—he's very ill still," began Murphy, becoming suddenly sedate and sad.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Maguire contemptuously. "Why keep up this farce, Dick, before Mr. Chesney, who, after all, is one of ourselves?—Mr. Denton can hardly be seen to-night, sir, being, in point of fact"——

"Under the influence of a sleeping-draught," interrupted Murphy gravely.

"Just so," continued Maguire; "but if you require a plain answer to a plain question or two, I shall be happy to tell you all you want to know over a pipe on the foksale."

Robert thought it strange enough that he should be thus referred to "Mister Maguire" for an explanation of such importance, but he was too desirous of obtaining it to do aught than close with

the offer. In a few minutes, the two were seated under shelter from the freshening breeze, each with a pipe in his mouth; they were quite alone, except for the watch—the emigrants being all in their bunks even at that comparatively early hour; a thousand stars were shining overhead; the breeze rang in the shrouds, but there was no other sound, save when a wave larger than common struck the vessel on her quarter, and made her shiver from stem to stern.

“Now, what is it you want to know, young man?” inquired Maguire.

“I want to know several things,” replied Robert, piqued by his companion’s tone, and also, perhaps, by the reflection that a confidence had been reposed in him which had been denied to himself. “Firstly, why have I been told by Mr. Denton that Mr. Kavanagh, my employer, was to join us on our voyage, when that was not the case?”

“Let us confine ourselves to facts,” replied the other, puffing slowly at his pipe. “Leave out ‘when that was not the case,’ and the answer is easy: Mr. Kavanagh is on board the ship at this present moment.”

“You are wondering who I am, young fellow,” continued he, “and since I have promised to satisfy a reasonable curiosity, I will tell you. I would not

CHAPTER IX.

The Cabin Passengers.

"MR. KAVANAGH on board! That is incredible," exclaimed Robert.

"I can't help *that*," returned Maguire; "I can only repeat that it is the fact. I saw him with my own eyes to-day. I think I may even promise that you shall see him with yours to-morrow."

"But the police"—commenced Chesney.

"Oh! you believe in the police, do you?" interrupted the other contemptuously, "and yet talk of things being 'incredible.' For my part, I have been in a ship before in which there was 'one too many' on board, and that was 'the devil' himself. The present incident, therefore, sinks into insignificance."

It was certain that Mr. Maguire was not joking; he never did joke, after the fashion of his compatriots, but used a certain staidness of speech and manner, sometimes, as in the case of the police galleys, diversified by ferocity.

"You are wondering who I am, young fellow," continued he, "and since I have promised to satisfy a reasonable curiosity, I will tell you. I would not

tell everybody, mind you (nor even you, for that matter, if we were not well out in the blue water); but you are a lad of spirit, and I like you. With your wits and pluck, you would make a figure in the world, if it was not for your slavish respect for people in high places."

"I was not aware that I entertained a slavish respect for any man," answered Robert, somewhat haughtily, for his youthful pride was touched.

"Nevertheless, it is so," continued Maguire coolly. "You are frightened at the very shadow of so-called authority; any Jack in office has only to cry out, 'In the king's name,' and you dare not lift your voice against him, far less your finger. Yet kings, and such-like, would have no existence but for the dulness of mankind. It pleases the great mass of the world to make-believe to worship stupidity, and to exalt it above independence and energy; for then, let the clever fellows do their best, they can never get to the top of the tree."

"I think I see what you mean," said Robert thoughtfully; "yet what is the feeling towards the young master, as they call him, by which our friends down yonder"—he pointed to the deck below—"are actuated, but this same worship of an accidental distinction? What is the possession of 'the old blood' but an accident of birth?"

"Quite true, my young friend. You might have even added (had you known it), 'How is it that you yourself are called "Mister Maguire," when there is no difference of present fortune between yourself and the poorest of your companions, but only that once upon a time your father held a bit of the land which he inherited by no merit of his own?' Well, the explanation of it is easy: these poor fellows are a parcel of fools."

"Perhaps," observed Robert, shrugging his shoulders; "still, there must be something in it. Murphy, for instance, would lay down his life for the young master."

"Very true; but that is because Murphy is *the* greatest fool of them all. Now, *I* like 'the young master,' as they call him, too, and would go as far to serve him, perhaps, as any of his poor besotted idolaters; but then I like him for his own sake. He is a fine fellow, and might have gone far even in his own country at one time, only luck was against him. Now, Murphy would admire him just the same if he were a miser or a coward, such as Louis was.—By-the-by"—here the speaker looked at his companion with great significance—"do you know about Louis?"

"I think I have heard it said that he was dead," said Robert, "that is all."

"Ah, well; then that is enough. We are already getting out of our reckoning. I promised to tell you something of my own life, which has nothing to do with Mr. Louis Kavanagh's death, poor devil.—My father was a squireen in Tipperary, as his fathers had been before him for many a generation. It was very creditable of them to go on succeeding their ancestors so regularly, and getting drunk in the same parlour with such assiduity; but life of that sort was too respectable for me, and on the occasion of a certain domestic difficulty (we were both wrong, and very drunk), I cut the paternal cable, and ran away to sea.—You ran away from home yourself, young fellow, did you not?"

"I did," said Robert gravely; "but it was to avoid my step-father's ill-treatment."

"No apology is requisite to *me*, my lad," said Maguire frankly. "I like a lad that runs away from home. What are ease and comfort at that age, compared to independence?"

"Nay, pray do not imagine that I left them when I left *my* home," explained Robert. "It was but a cottage, and my step-father but a game-keeper."

"Then where did you learn your fine words and your good figuring?"

"At the village school. It seemed to me that

learning was the only thing that could get me out of a condition that was very unpleasant, and so I worked hard at my books."

"Ah, that's bad," observed Mister Maguire deprecatingly. "I don't mind a young fellow's learning to read and to write, and even a little arithmetic, which I have myself found useful at a pinch—but I am dead against books. They disincline you to action. At this moment, instead of saying to yourself, 'Here is a man of spirit and experience, whose views must needs be worth something, and I'll follow his lead,' you are wasting time in thinking about it. 'Will it be prudent to do so?' is the idea that occurs to you, or even (if they taught you out of good books), 'Will it be right?' Now, it is one excellent point in the character of our good friends below here, that they never think."

Not a muscle of Mr. Maguire's countenance moved, save those employed in the suction of his pipe. It was impossible to tell by the expression of his face whether he was in jest or in earnest. "However, let me go on with my story," he continued. "I went to sea as a cabin-boy, and in twelve years' time—when I was seven-and-twenty—I found myself the captain of a ship. It was but a small one, indeed—a sloop called the *Mermaid*, with but very few hands on board, but I was proud

enough of being her skipper: she was laden with oil from Barbadoes, and we had not long left the place, when we fell in with a strange sail. She showed no colours; and as she drew nearer, I made her out to be a schooner, full of hands all in white shirts, and with a whole tier of great guns.

“‘Where does this sloop belong to?’ hailed she.

“‘To London,’ said I; ‘from Barbadoes.’

“‘We know that,’ was the answer. ‘Send your master on board.’

“And a black flag flew up to her mast-head. That was thirty years ago, and yet I remember that moment as clearly as though it happened yesterday. One doesn’t fall into the hands of pirates every day. Notwithstanding my alarm, I felt it hard to keep my temper (which was always short), when the captain called out, as we were making the best haste we could in our little boat towards his ship: ‘Pull faster, you speckled-shirted dogs [as though we would not have worn white ones, if we had known of his preference for them], or I will drub you within an inch of your lives, and that inch too.’ But I knew better than to answer; for when your hand is in the lion’s mouth, says the proverb, get it out as easy as you can. Only I made up my mind, that if the worst came to the worst, I would take

that gentleman round the waist and jump into the sea with him, at any rate.

“‘*And who are we, think you?*’ said he, when I got upon deck.

“‘*Sir,*’ said I, ‘*I believe you are gentlemen of fortune belonging to the sea.*’

“‘*Nay, there you lie,*’ said he, ‘*for, by——, we are pirates.*’

“For though, like most people in authority, he was inclined to give himself airs, this gentleman was very plain-spoken. He asked what I had on board my ship—warning me at the same time that a lie would cost me my life—and was very dissatisfied when I told him. It seemed to me, indeed, that the time had almost come for his taking that leap with me into the sea, the satisfaction of which I was fully resolved not to deny myself; but, fortunately for us both, it seemed he had not the absolute disposal of life and death in his own hands, but must needs consult the ship’s company.

“In the mean time, I was sent down to his cabin to await the result of their deliberations. While there, one of his men came in, and with a friendly countenance, said, ‘So you don’t know me, Mr. Maguire?’

“‘No,’ said I; ‘I have not that pleasure.’

“Then he reminded me that he had served in

the same ship with me five years ago, as likewise two other of his companions had.

“‘We three wish you well,’ said he; ‘but it is unfortunate that the *Mermaid* has so little in her, which makes the others bitter against you. Now, what we shall propose—since they are for shooting you—is to make you one of ourselves; for there is not a man on board of us who can keep accounts, which we know you can do. So I have come down to bid you have no hesitation, in case you get the chance of such an offer—not without risk to myself, let me tell you, but one should stand by an old shipmate.’

“I thanked him heartily, and said, what was very true, though piracy was not to my taste, a bullet through the head was much less so; and in the end it turned out as he had given me to hope. I was made purser of the *Mother Carey*, as their vessel was called, that very night, and shook hands with the captain upon it (instead of kissing them, as when the king gives you anything), and with all the crew. Moreover, they brought in a huge bowl, made of solid silver, which held eight quarts of punch, and drank until sunrise to my new appointment—a most undesirable one, you are doubtless thinking, my friend, and so thought I at that time. With the exception of the three men that

had saved my life, I had no desire to see any one of my present companions again, unless it should be at some place of execution; but one's opinion changes upon many things in this world, and I have been on board worse ships, and mated with worse crews, than that of the *Mother Carey*."

"But how long *were* you on board of her, before you had an opportunity of escape?"

"Well, really," said Maguire, sucking slowly at his pipe, and regarding Robert with a sort of comical grimness, "I can't quite say as to the opportunity of escape, but I was with the *Mother Carey*—or, at all events, with her chickens, for she went to the bottom the next cruise—for about *twenty years*. But there, it's getting late, lad, and time to turn in, so I'll finish my yarn another time." And with that he rose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and with a nod at his petrified young companion, descended gravely into the steerage.

Twenty years the companion of pirates! It was clear, even to the inexperience of Robert Chesney, that no man could be amongst such persons for such a length of time, and yet not of them. "Misther Maguire," then, who enjoyed such respect below-stairs, and with Murphy, and who even associated on familiar terms with Mr. Denton himself, had been in his time "a gentleman of fortune," as

he had delicately put it, "belonging to the sea!" This was sufficiently astounding, of course, but it was not absolutely shocking to the feelings; for in the first place, the whole story might be untrue — "only a yarn," as the narrator himself had termed it, spun to beguile an idle hour, or to impose upon his own (Robert's) credulity; and secondly, if it was true (and indeed he believed it to be so), the circumstance had happened so long ago, and was so much out of the pale of ordinary experience, that it was robbed of its more offensive features. Piracy, as Robert understood, was a thing of the past; and this strange fellow-passenger of his must have been one of the very last of that now legendary race, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them. This Maguire (who, moreover, had some good points about him — or, at all events, points that were attractive) was, after all, to be regarded more as some marine monster, so rare that it is more an object of curiosity than of loathing or alarm; or as some antediluvian animal, supposed to be extinct, whom nobody would now wish to destroy, even if it still was a little dangerous, but would rather preserve and make much of, as a solitary specimen of what had once existed.

What doubtless strengthened these liberal views

in Robert, who was certainly not without good principles, was the powerful interest that the relation thus suddenly broken off had excited in him; he wanted, it must be confessed, to hear the conclusion of the matter. Moreover, the confidence that had thus been reposed in him—for it was reasonable to suppose that Maguire did not show everybody this strange leaf of his own history—was a compliment to his good sense as well as his sense of honour. It was evidently not expected that he should tell this wonderful story all over the ship, as many lads of his age would have hastened to have done. He did not see that what was a compliment to his prudence was paid at the expense of his sensitiveness to the claims of justice and authority; that it must also have not been expected that he would be so shocked at the revelation as to denounce the author of it. He lay awake half the night thinking of the *Mother Carey*, and dreamed of a “speckled-shirted dog,” who was, however, in his dream but a retriever; and not until the morning—so wholly had the greater wonder absorbed the lesser—did he remember what Maguire had told him of Kavanagh’s presence on board the *Star of Erin*. If *that* was true it was only a few steps more of improbability to be surmounted to believe the strange story his companion had told

about himself. The greeting that Maguire gave him the next morning was more brief and commonplace even than usual, being confined to a careless nod, so that at first Robert was inclined to think that the other had repented of his confidence of the previous evening. When noon had arrived without his receiving any communication, he got very impatient, and even irritable, for it struck him that he had been made the victim of a practical joke; but after dinner, Murphy came to him with the information that Mr. Denton wished to see him on a matter of importance.

"He is better, then?" observed Robert, careful not to exhibit his own state of expectation—for though it was certain that Murphy must know any secret connected with his young master that Maguire knew, he thought it well to show himself worthy of the latter's confidence.

"Yes, he's better, but still in his berth; and the light hurts his eyes, so you must talk through the curtain."

When Robert knocked at the cabin-door, it was certainly a stronger and more healthy voice that bade him "come in" than he had expected to hear; and he found Mr. Denton, though still confined to bed, very different in appearance from what he had expected. Not only was he far from looking like a

sick man but lately *in extremis*, but even better than when he had seen him in Herne Street.

"Sit down there, Robert," said he, pointing to a seat beside his pillow, but separated from it by the curtain which was drawn round him, "and tell me about the boys."

Robert made his report; to which the other seemed to listen attentively, and then expressed his high approval of what he had done.

"With Mr. Kavanagh away, and myself ill," said he frankly, "I don't know how we should have got on without you. I hope you find your own position comfortable on board, as I am sure it deserves to be?"

"Yes, thank you, sir."

It seemed ungrateful to say to this kind old invalid, "But the promise that you made to me has not been kept with respect to one thing—that Mr. Frank was to come with us."

"And did you write home, as I told you, and bid your pretty sweetheart reply to you at Liverpool?"

"I wrote home, sir, and got an answer," replied Robert a little stiffly. Mr. Denton was not his patron, and this light allusion to his Lizzie seemed unjustifiable. Moreover, there was a movement of the curtain which suggested that his companion

might be laughing at him—rather heartily for a sick man.

“And what did the young woman say, Robert?”

“Well—she sent me but ill news, sir; but such as it was, it only concerns myself and her. If Mr. Kavanagh had asked me, it would be different, but you must excuse——”

There was a chuckle from the bed; the curtain was drawn suddenly back, and, to Robert's intense astonishment, revealed Mr. Frank Kavanagh himself, just as he had seen him on the morning after their adventure, except that he had a smoking-cap on his head, which he wore, perhaps, by way of night-cap!

“There goes my scalp,” cried he, flinging the gray wig which had so long concealed his own curling locks, against the cabin wall, “and Mr. Denton with it, though, you see, he has kept his word with you, after all.”

Robert took the hand that was extended to him in all sincerity; he was delighted to find himself once more face to face with his friendly patron; but his prevailing idea was still that of astonishment at the means that had secured this incognito.

“So you were Mr. Denton, were you, all along, sir, and Mr. Wilson as well?”

“Yes,” returned Kavanagh gravely; the gay tone

and the smiling look both vanished—swept away, as Robert judged, by the tender memory which the latter *alias* had evoked—"yes. There were reasons—political ones—why I lived in Herne Street, under a feigned name."

"And when the police came on board they never found you out neither! You should have seen them on deck, sir, scrutinizing us all, and feeling the hair of our heads, though why they did that I cannot imagine."

"Nor any one else, I should think," said Kavanagh, forcing a laugh: "they were not very sagacious, truly, but they were very civil. The inspector apologized for disturbing so confirmed an invalid as myself.—But enough of that: I wish to know of your own affairs, Robert. What of your sweetheart, and her ill news? Can she not reconcile herself to your leaving her, and taking so long a journey? Well, that is only to be expected."

A sigh followed Kavanagh's words: Robert felt even more certain than before that what had so suddenly turned his impulsive patron's mirth to melancholy was the remembrance of pretty "Miss Mary."

"No, sir; it is worse than that;" and he told him of the troubles which Lizzie's letter had disclosed to him.

"Well, well," said Kavanagh cheerfully, "we need not be afraid that a good-looking lad like you will be cut out by your step-father; but the poverty and the poaching are real misfortunes. What a pity we could not have brought the whole family out with us."

"Yes, indeed, sir; that is what I had in my mind when we were at Liverpool," answered Robert. "If I had known who you were, I think I should have plucked up courage to ask you that great favour, notwithstanding all the obligations——"

"Tush, tush!" interrupted the other kindly; "don't talk of them. Without a treasurer and comptroller such as you have proved yourself to be, we could never have got on as we have. Even Murphy allows that. No, no; the debt is quite on the other side. As for your friends trying their luck in the New World, they can do that still; and it is much better that they should follow you when you have got settled somewhere, than help to swell the number of our incapables. If money is wanting for their passage, I will let you have it—advance it out of your salary, if you are too proud to take it as a gift. There, there; that is settled, so no more words about it."

It was no longer a wonder to Robert that "the boys" should have such reverence for their "young

master," for he felt himself as though he could have laid down his life for his sake. It was not only gratitude which affected him; there was an indescribable charm in Kavanagh's tone and manner that was wholly removed from the lad's experience, and almost seemed to him to belong to a superior being; it was not patronage, and it was not friendship, but it had the grace of the one, and the tenderness of the other.

"Indeed, sir, you overwhelm me with kindness," was all he could answer; "and I only hope I may show myself——"

"Yes, yes, we shall always be good friends, Robert," interrupted the other; "I am sure of that. And now about the boys—I mean *my* boys. Are they under the belief that I have forsaken them, or have they more faith than some people I could mention?"

"Well, sir," replied Robert apologetically, "they are still too sick to be very urgent about anything else, and besides, they don't see why you should not step on board any day from some island or continent."

Kavanagh laughed, but there was a touch of pity in the tone in which he replied, "Ah! yes, that is likely enough. They know nothing but what the priest tells them, poor fellows!"—then added still

more gravely, "and perhaps the greatest proof of their simplicity is their belief in myself."

Here, somewhat to Robert's relief—for Kavanagh's voice had sunk so low that his companion scarcely knew whether this last observation was intended for his ear or not—there was a knock at the cabin-door, and Murphy entered, which put an end to further confidential talk.

CHAPTER X.

The Clouds gather.

THE next time Maguire met Robert, his quick eye detected a difference in the lad's expression. "Ah!" said he, "you have seen him, I perceive. Did I not tell you the truth?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Robert. "But you must allow there was some cause for incredulity. Surely, nothing could be more unlikely than the whole affair."

"To *you*, perhaps not," answered Maguire. "But as for me, I am too old to be astonished at anything. Besides, I have seen a much stranger thing in the way of 'keeping quiet' on board ship."

"Then that must have been on board the *Mother Carey*," said Robert, smiling.

"Well, lad, it was so." He, too, smiled good-naturedly enough, for he saw that the lad was greedy to hear more of that adventure; and lighting his pipe, and sitting down under the bulwarks as before, proceeded to gratify him.

"The story of my life would weary you, and,

besides, some of its incidents might prove a trifle too strong for your stomach. But what we have just been saying, reminds me of a curious circumstance. While I was perforce a member of the pirate crew, they met with some hard knocks, for it is not every ship that gives up to the black flag without a tussle; and next to Captain Grim himself (as he was termed, for neither he nor his men were particular about preserving their real names), the greatest fire-eater amongst them was a good-looking young fellow called Galley. He was not a general favourite, because he kept himself to himself, and did not drink much; but his bravery made him respected. I well remember his resenting some innuendos of the mate, with respect to his sparing the punch in order that he might win at cards, one night, by throwing the whole bowl of liquor over him, and the duel that took place in consequence. When any of the crew quarrelled, it was not permitted to fight on board, but they were put on the first land we came to, and there settled the matter with sword or pistol. The way in which young Galley polished off the mate with the sharp steel in half-a-dozen cuts, was a very pretty sight, nor have I ever seen a man of his age so dexterous with that weapon. Whenever we met a bigger ship than we liked the look of, and it was a question of flight or fight, he

was always for fighting; and sometimes, when we have been chatting together, just as you and I are now, he would express himself with respect to his own trade in the most truculent manner. Being only a sort of amateur myself, I was allowed to have my own opinion about piracy, and I ventured to tell him that it seemed to me to be an unsatisfactory sort of life, especially as it had for the most part a noose of rope at the end of it. 'And quite right too,' said he: 'if it were not for hanging us pretty fellows, every cowardly scoundrel would turn pirate, and so infest the seas that men of courage would starve. The ocean would be crowded with rogues, like the land, and no merchant would dare venture out, so that our trade would no longer be worth the following.' Well, when the *Mother Carey* came to grief, and her chickens were lodged in jail, previously to having their necks wrung, an appeal was made to the court on behalf of Galley, such as astonished me more than if the honest fellow had played booty, and turned king's evidence: his defence was, that he was a *young woman*. And as one of the gentler sex, supposed to be incapable of piratical conduct—and also being very good-looking—the judges acquitted her on that plea. And now you will easily understand, my friend, how the fact of Mr. Kavanagh's turning out to be

Mr. Denton does not appear to me so very extraordinary. You may think that one of us, at all events, was cognizant of Galley's sex, for whose sake, perhaps, he might even have assumed the masculine garb; but this was certainly not so; and, indeed, the sixth article of our regulations (which were common, I believe, to all the fraternity) ran as follows: *If any man is found carrying a woman to sea disguised, or even conniving at such an act, he shall suffer death.*"

"You had laws, then, it seems, like honest people?" observed Robert.

"Most certainly. We had Articles of War, some of which, at least, were as strictly observed as on board of a king's ship, and to which every man had to subscribe; and I did so myself (though of course under compulsion). There were ten (if I remember right) in all. Number one established universal suffrage: *Every man had an equal vote in affairs of moment; an equal share of the fresh provisions and strong liquors, at any time seized, and might use them at pleasure, unless a scarcity* (no uncommon thing with us) *made it necessary to vote a retrenchment.* Number two referred to public property, in which, *if any man defrauded his companions, if it was but the worth of a dollar, he was marooned* (that is, set on the first desolate island we might come to, with

a gun and a few charges of powder and shot, and a bottle of water, to perish of starvation). *If the robbery was only between one another, the offender had his ears and nose split, but was not marooned.* The third article was directed against gambling, and was by no means scrupulously observed. The fourth commanded *lights and candles to be extinguished at eight o'clock; and if any of the crew after that hour were still inclined for drinking, they were to drink on the open deck.* The fifth related to keeping the cutlasses and pistols clean and fit for service, and was the most popular of all. The men were extravagantly nice in the beauty and richness of their weapons, and would give sometimes at an auction (at the mast) as much as forty pounds a pair for pistols, which they wore in time of service slung over their shoulders, and adorned with ribbons. The sixth article I have already quoted. The seventh decreed *death to any man who should desert the ship or his quarters in battle.* The eighth was to arrange quarrels. *There was to be no striking on board, but (as I have said) at the nearest convenient spot, the disputants were landed and placed back to back at twenty paces. At the word of command, they turned and fired immediately, or else the piece was knocked out of their hands. Then, if both missed, they came to their cutlasses, and who drew first blood*

was held the victor. The ninth enacted that no man should talk of breaking up their way of living until each had cleared a thousand pounds. But if any man should lose a limb or become a cripple in the public service, he was to have eight hundred dollars out of the common stock, and for lesser hurts proportionally. The tenth and last article provided the captain and quartermaster should receive two shares of a prize; the master, boatswain, and gunner, one share and a half; and other officers, one and a quarter."

"Then there were persons in authority, as well as laws among you?" remarked Robert, not forgetful of Mr. Maguire's anarchical opinions of the previous night.

"Yes, there were; nor do I deny that such institutions are necessary. Nevertheless, so far as government was concerned, the *Mother Carey* was, I contend, a model vessel; nay, there is no doubt, looking at the matter as a commercial speculation, that, with ordinary prudence, any man on board might have made his thousand pounds twice over! The law against drunkenness, however, and gambling was almost a dead letter; and the captain, as you may judge from my own case, was unnecessarily brutal."

"Was he cruel to others as well as yourself, then?" inquired Robert.

"Yes, indeed. I have known him make a poor skipper, in whose cargo he was disappointed, eat his own ears with pepper and salt! He had not the headpiece for a captain; and that is what I complain of in other societies, that men who are altogether unfit for it are trusted with authority."

Robert was too horrified with the incident of the skipper's ears, to pay much attention to this philosophical observation; but it did not escape him that Mr. Maguire was very charitable in his views with respect to piracy, and seemed inexplicably desirous to make his listener a convert to them. At that time, however, he did not think very seriously of the matter. Mr. Maguire still appeared to him in the light of a *lusus naturæ*—a being to excite wonder rather than apprehension. He did not reflect that representations of exciting adventure, and wealth easily come by, although they had no influence upon himself, might have their weight with more ignorant and impulsive hearers; that the spark which falls innocuous on the hearth-rug, will set a heap of shavings in a blaze.

"You think, then, that if you had had a wise man instead of a brute for captain, you would have made an excellent speculation of the *Mother Carey*," observed Robert drily; "and that each of the crew

might have retired from business upon a handsome fortune?"

"Yes, I do," said Maguire boldly. "If I had not been an ass at that time, I might now myself be a rich man, for that matter."

"They gave you a share of their gains, then, though you were but an amateur?"

"Of course they did; why the deuce should they not?" answered the other, so naïvely, and even indignantly, that Robert refrained from putting the inquiry that had suggested itself, as to how Mr. Maguire had reconciled it to his conscience to partake of such ill-got spoil. "Yes, I could have made my fortune," continued he, "had I had the head on my shoulders which I carry now; while Captain Grim, drunkard and gambler as he was, used to boast of his twenty thousand pounds laid up in some place, which he was wont to say 'only himself and the devil knew of; and the longest liver should take all.' His weakness was drink," continued Mr. Maguire, in a deprecating tone; "under the influence of which he became just what all men in authority become who have no right to their high places—tyrannical. I shall never forget his firing a brace of pistols right and left under the dinner-table one night among us all, 'in order,' as he explained, 'that we should not forget who he

was.' We fined him eight hundred dollars, however, for breaking the mate's leg with one of the bullets, so that it was an expensive shot."

"Then it must have been rather dangerous work to be even purser on board the *Mother Carey*?" remarked Robert.

"Oh, that was nothing," answered Maguire coolly. "I've—that is, I have known a man on board that ship to stand in the powder-magazine during an action in which we were likely to get the worst of it, torch in hand, with orders from the captain to send all to blazes, in case things went the wrong way.—But here's one of your sheep from the steerage in search of his shepherd." And leaving Robert with one of his many charges, who happened to come up at that moment to make some complaint respecting rations—he had forgotten for the tenth time to bring his pannikin and other utensils on deck to receive them, and the steward had poured rice, oatmeal, and flour, peas, sugar, and tea, into one paper-bag, in a rage—Mr. Maguire sauntered away. It struck Robert that he was glad to do so; that he had spoken rather more freely than he had intended to do respecting his own share in the proceedings of the crew of the *Mother Carey*, and this idea was strengthened by the fact, that he made no further allusion to that vessel of his own accord,

and was chary of doing so even when interrogated concerning her.

The *Star of Erin* pursued her voyage upon the whole most favourably; there were storms and calms, of course, but for the most part she had fine weather, and there was little to complain of save the tediousness inseparable from life on shipboard. Notwithstanding what has been sung of it, this is a very prosaic state of existence; on sea, one day is more like another than it can possibly be on shore, even in the most unvarying of households. The smallest details assume a gigantic importance. The sight of a shoal of porpoises, the catching of a shark, the speaking with another ship, are events to be remembered, because they are the only ones. The sunsets of the tropics are gorgeous, but there are times when the sun is not setting, and, to say the truth, "the boys" did not, as a general rule, appreciate it even when it did. Some of the women made themselves useful in cooking, and mending, and washing clothes; but the men did nothing; when they were not listening to Mr. Maguire's yarns, of which they were very greedy, they lay on deck and slept all day, then went below, and slept again—a mode of existence which suited them very well. Robert had his duties, such as they were, to occupy him; he borrowed a few books from the captain, of

whom he was a great favourite, and devoured them word by word; and had always by him a letter for Lizzie, ready for any homeward-bound vessel that might volunteer to be their ocean-postman. But the time hung heavily on his hands. How differently would it have passed (thought he) if he could have had Lizzie for a fellow-passenger! how differently it *would* pass when she had once joined him in the Underworld! His letters were full of that bright prospect, we may be sure.

When they had been about two months at sea, an incident happened to vary the monotony of their existence. Mr. Kavanagh emerged from his cabin in his own proper character. The enthusiasm among the tenants of the steerage was immense, yet not so great as it would have been, had his presence on board been unsuspected: one by one, "the boys"—that is, his own Tipperary boys—had been of late admitted into the secret, and these had told the rest. But even as it was, the turmoil and excitement were something startling. There was not only joy that the young master was among them; there was also triumph because a victory had been obtained over the law. The crew, indeed, were comparatively indifferent about the matter, but they formed but a small portion of the population of the *Star of Erin*. The captain, as Robert could not

but remark, not only did not share in these manifestations of delight, but showed some signs of displeasure. This might be accounted for by the fact, that he had been imposed upon—used as a cat's-paw by Kavanagh—for it seemed he had himself been ignorant hitherto of the identity of that gentleman with Denton; but, at all events, so it was. The steerage passengers were exceedingly uproarious that night, having had liquor supplied them by Murphy; and Robert remained on deck until a late hour, in case his services might be required amongst them. While thus keeping voluntary watch, the captain came up and spoke with him on the matter, and his manner seemed uneasy; they both agreed that to give liquor in such abundance to so excitable a throng was most injudicious: it might have been fancy, but, in the moonlight, Robert caught sight of something gleaming in the captain's breast-pocket which looked very like the butt of a revolver.

CHAPTER XI.

Promotion.

TOWARDS morning, and when the sounds of disorder from beneath had at last ceased, Robert was about to retire to his berth, when suddenly he heard a cry of "Help, help!" from the direction of the captain's cabin. Apprehensive, he scarcely knew of what, he rushed towards it, when on his way he was arrested by a repetition of the cry, not from where he had expected, but from the cabin occupied by his patron. It was uttered in muffled, half-suffocated tones; and finding the door locked, Robert flung himself without a moment's hesitation against it, and forced it open. Mr. Kavanagh was alone, sitting up in his berth, with the skull-cap on that he now wore night and day, and pointing with shaking finger to some object—an imaginary one, as it turned out—in the centre of the cabin. The moonlight which streamed in on him at the little window showed his staring eyes, his trembling lips, his features palsied as if with excess of terror. "Help, help!" he continued to cry in a hoarse

whisper. "Keep him off! keep him off! I say. He struck me first; I swear it."

"Who struck you, Mr. Kavanagh? There is no one here," said Robert soothingly.

"There *is*, there *is*—there, there, with his strangled face!" and the bare stretched-out arm pointed quiveringly where nothing was to be seen. "Help, Murphy, help!"

"I am here, master," answered Murphy from without. Then pushing hurriedly in, and seeing Robert, he whispered huskily: "Be off, lad; you are not wanted here."

Robert heard him, but took no notice: he had, he deemed, as much right to be where he was as Murphy had; nay, more, for it was clear enough that the latter was much intoxicated, and therefore unfit to be of service to his master; and, moreover, the insolence of the man's tone was such as might well excite antagonism.

"Do you hear, you fool?" continued Murphy savagely. "You are not wanted here."

"Yes, yes; take him away," muttered Kavanagh, huddling himself in the bed-clothes. "His mouth is bleeding. There, there!"

It was clear to any person who had the use of his senses that these words could have reference to

no visible being; but no sooner were they uttered, than, as if taking them as a positive command, Murphy threw himself on Robert with the fury of a wild beast, and dragged him to the door. The suddenness of the attack for the moment overcame the lad; but he soon recovered himself, and grappled with his assailant, not without effect. Had they both been on equal terms, indeed, the conflict would not long have been doubtful, but Murphy, being far gone in liquor, lost his footing, and fell on the cabin floor, with Robert above him. There they writhed and struggled, till presently Maguire appeared, half-dressed, and far from sober-looking, at the open door.

"What is it, Dick?" inquired he. "Is it money you're wrastling for?"

"Put him out!" roared Murphy — "put him out!"

"Nay, it's an eviction, is it? Then you may just put him out yourself, for it's contrary to my principles to lend a hand to it."

"The master don't want him here," gasped Murphy, for Robert's hand had fastened on his neckerchief to some purpose. "He's got the fit on him."

"Oh, that's another thing," replied Maguire

gravely. — "I am the last man to interfere with an honest rough-and-tumble, Master Chesney, but this exhibition must positively close." He stooped down over the combatants, and seizing Robert, who was still uppermost, by the neck, compelled him, on pain of suffocation, to let go his hold; then swung him outside the cabin-door, as easily as though he had been a cat, and closed it. Like a cat, Robert alighted on his feet, and sprang at the door, though a moment's reflection must have convinced him that it would be madness to attempt to push his way against two such antagonists: he had forced the lock in the first instance, but the opposition he now encountered was far stronger than that of bolt or bar.

A chuckling sound from within proclaimed the sense of superiority enjoyed by at least one of the besieged, and convinced him of the uselessness of his efforts. Furious and baffled, he retired to his own cabin, not to sleep, but to reflect on the humiliation he had so unjustly suffered. He was no tale-bearer, but he was thoroughly resolved to lay the whole matter before Mr. Kavanagh, and if not righted by him, to withdraw from a service degraded by such companionship as Murphy's. In the New World, a man might make his own way without a patron. Still he could not forget that he

was under great obligations to Kavanagh, nor forbear to pity his present condition. A London lad, in the same position in life, would probably have been at no loss for the right name for the attack to which he had been so lately a witness, but to Robert it seemed some uncommon disorder—perhaps an epileptic fit.

Days went by, and on the morning of each, Robert presented himself at Kavanagh's cabin, only to be refused admittance in Murphy's dogged tones; but this, and a certain offensive grin with which Maguire now greeted him, only made him more intent upon his purpose. On the sixth morning, he was admitted. He found Mr. Kavanagh looking very ill and pale, which touched him; and when he held out his wasted hand for him to take, and welcomed him even more kindly than usual, his wrongs somehow lost their proportions, and became at most a grievance.

"So I hear you have been to ask after me every morning, Robert?"

"Yes, indeed, sir; but Murphy denied me admittance. He said I was not wanted."

"Well, well, he is gone now, and you are here," urged Kavanagh, smiling. "He's a rough fellow, and, I know, resents another's showing me any regard, which is very unreasonable."

"Nay, sir, I find no fault with him on that account; but when you were taken ill the other night and cried 'Help, help!'"—— A sudden spasm shot across the sick man's face.— "Something ails you, sir," said Robert hastily. "It was very selfish of me to be making complaints at such a time: forgive me."

"No, no; I am better now," gasped Kavanagh. "I would rather hear all about it. I cried 'Help, help!' you say?"

"Yes, sir; and then I ran in, and found you sitting up in bed, and pointing to I know not what."

"Well, well, and what did I say more?" inquired the sick man nervously.

"Nothing more, sir, that was any sense. But while you wandered on, in Murphy came, and bade me leave the cabin, since you did not want me. It might have been so, but it seemed to me you did want 'help' of some sort; and since he was drunk, and I was sober, that I was the better fitted to give it. Then he threw himself upon me, and strove to turn me out by force. I left my mark upon his throat, I reckon." Here Robert paused, stopped this time by an ejaculation from the other of pain and horror.

"What wickedness!" he murmured; "you might have strangled him!"

"Indeed, sir, he might have strangled *me*," answered Robert, indignant at what seemed to him an expression of gross favouritism. "If the big drunken brute had kept his feet, he *would* have done it. I do not show my own regard for you, by flying like a bull-dog at the faces of your friends, but I strive to serve you, sir, as best I can"——

"You do, you *do*," interrupted Kavanagh. "It is an ill return to be treated thus indeed. It shall not happen again; I will speak to Murphy."—Robert smiled incredulously.—"Ah, you think speaking of no use? Well, we shall see: tell Murphy to come hither at once."

"Indeed, sir, there is no need to trouble yourself about the matter so immediately," urged Robert; "when you get well and strong"——

"I said *at once*," reiterated Kavanagh; "did you not hear me?"

Robert opened the cabin-door, and there stood Murphy in close attendance.

"Mr. Kavanagh wants you."

Without bestowing a glance at the speaker, Murphy made one stride to his master's pillow, and there stood, obedient as the dog that hears the

shepherd's voice, and springing to his side awaits his signal.

"I wish to speak to you, Dick, about our good friend, Robert, here. We are not in England now, begirt by spies, and hunted by the bloodhounds of the law; and when we were, remember, though you doubted him, this lad proved true as steel. There is no danger in his being one of us, in short, and if there were, I still would wish it. Don't speak"—his voice became imperative, and even harsh—"my mind is fixed upon it, and immovable. What you and I lack we have found in this good lad. He can use his wits and fingers too, and in the days to come will be more useful to us even than he has been. At present, he has no authority, and you (he tells me) take advantage of it to treat him as you dare not treat one of those whom I have placed under his charge. This must not be. In future, look on him as my lieutenant, my second in command, whom, in my absence, you will obey as though he were myself. And if I die"—

"The saints forbid!" ejaculated Murphy piously.

"Still, it may happen, Dick," continued Kavanagh kindly, "and then what would become of all these poor fellows, without a head? I say, if I should die, this man, so far as I can make him so

—and with *you* at least I *can*—is my successor. Do you hear?”

The expression of Mr. Richard Murphy's countenance was curious to witness. Rage, dislike, humiliation, were struggling within him against a habit of obedience to his master's wishes that was second nature; he looked from Chesney to Kavanagh, from Kavanagh to Chesney, in such pitiable perplexity, that the latter, who had a generous spirit, was moved by it.

“Indeed, Mr. Kavanagh,” said he, “I have no wish to exercise authority over Murphy, but merely to be made secure from any such outrage as he put upon me the other night.”

“That I feel sure of, Robert, or I should not intrust you with it. I know too well, from my own case, how ill it is to possess a power that one is not fit to wield.” Here he stopped and sighed.

“Arrah, be aisy, Mr. Frank; sure, yourself is the king of men,” whispered Murphy reassuringly; but the other took no notice.

“Yes, that is the only way,” continued he thoughtfully. “I tried to make you a friend of this good lad, Dick, but that, through your own fault, has failed. I now make him your superior. You could

not give your good-will, it seems; but there will be no excuse for refusing your obedience."

"And is the likes of him to come between me and you, Masther Frank?" asked Murphy pitifully.

"No, Dick; no man can do that, I think, nor woman either," answered Kavanagh tenderly. "Don't fret, man. The lad has had honour done him, but not at your expense. Give me your hands, both of you."

He placed them in one another as he had done once before on the night of their first meeting. Robert grasped Murphy's fingers heartily enough, and Murphy returned the pressure, keeping his eyes, however, intently fixed upon Kavanagh's face.

"You see what I am doing, master, for your sake," they seemed to say.

"That's well, Dick; now leave us for the present, for I have some private talk to finish with Mr. Chesney."

"Very good, Masther Frank.—Perhaps, sir"—and here he turned to Robert with an air of hesitating respect—"you will kindly let me know when you have done, and I may come back again." As he said these words, he ran out of the cabin as though he could bear the scene no longer; [to ad-

dress Robert as his superior thus voluntarily, [had probably been the hardest task which he had ever set himself to do.

"Poor Dick!" ejaculated Kavanagh remorsefully. "I think that ought to content you, lad."

"Indeed, sir, it was more than I asked, or even desired," answered Robert.

"Perhaps," replied the other; "but it was necessary. I remember when I was at the military college—years ago in France—the only way by which a certain worthy cadet could be saved from a most unmerited persecution was by creating him a sub-lieutenant; and a first-rate officer he made."

"You were in the army, then, sir?" asked Robert simply.

"Yes and no: that is, I had a military training, which might have been useful had circumstances turned out as they were expected to do."

"In Ireland, I suppose?"

"Yes; there is no need to make a secret of the matter now, even if you have not guessed it. I nourished a vain dream, which was only real inasmuch as it was dangerous. On board ship, I was obliged to be Denton; in Herne Street, I was

Wilson. You see, I keep nothing from you, lieutenant."

"Yes, sir," replied Robert naïvely. "I should like, however, if you would not take it ill, to ask you one more question."

"What is that?" Kavanagh's tone became suddenly impatient, and even suspicious, and under pretence of settling his skull-cap on his head, he covered his eyes with his hand. "I never promised to tell you all my private affairs, however."

"Indeed, sir, I should not be so impertinent as to inquire into them. But might I ask what sort of man is he whom they call 'Misther Maguire?'"

Kavanagh removed his hand from his face, and revealed an expression of great relief.

"Oh, Maguire!" answered he gaily. "Yes, he is a strange fellow, and I do not wonder that he has excited your curiosity. Moreover, it is only right it should be satisfied, since it is likely he will be more or less mixed up with our own fortunes. Well, he was the son of a gentleman on a neighbouring estate to that of my father, and who, like the bad boys of the story-books, ran away at an early age to sea. He led a very queer life, I fancy—what is called 'a checkered career,' which is mostly black, you know; though I don't believe there was ever much

real harm in him. When he returned home after a quarter of a century, he found matters worse than he had left them. His father 'evicted' by the mortgagees from what had once been his own property, and other unpleasantries, such as only occur in Ireland. Then he got mixed up in 'the troubles,' and had to flee the country and save his skin, poor fellow—like myself."

"Nay, sir, not so; for it seems to me that he had nothing to lose, and all to gain, whereas you had an estate at stake."

"I had at one time—yes," returned Kavanagh thoughtfully. "There is something in what you say, perhaps, though we have no right to impute selfish motives. You do not like Mr. Maguire, it seems."

"I don't dislike him, sir, personally, but I confess that—of late—he has seemed to me to be a dangerous man."

"Dangerous! why dangerous?" inquired Kavanagh quickly.

"Well, sir, I can't exactly say; but this man has great influence among our people, and if he choose to use it ill, there might be great danger. I am certain, at all events, that that is the captain's

opinion. You have been ill and confined to your cabin, so that you may not have observed it; but I notice that both he and the other officers of the ship go about armed."

"Armed! How long has that been the case?" inquired Kavanagh with excitement, a deep flush suffusing his pale face.

"Since the day you came on deck in your real character."

"That is strange," muttered Kavanagh; "very strange. Is this a matter of general remark; do the boys know it?"

"I think not, sir; they do not take much notice of anything; but there is one man that knows it beside myself, unless I am much mistaken; and that is Maguire himself."

"Ah; then he should have told me. I mean," added Kavanagh hastily, "he should have confessed that he had been guilty of a foolish indiscretion. There is no harm in him, nor in my people; but there should be no ground for supposing harm. Keep your eyes open, Robert, for the future, and, above all things, your mouth shut. To talk of danger before some people is like putting a match

to a fire-grate that is already laid. And now tell poor Dick that I am ready to see him. To-morrow, or the next day, at furthest, I shall be well and about again. Good-day, lad, good-day."

CHAPTER XII.

The Volcanic Island.

THE interview was over, and clearly, as it seemed to Robert, hurried to a close by the tidings which he had just communicated. It was evident that Mr. Kavanagh had been unaware of the effect produced by his own appearance among his people, and yet when informed of it, he had not expressed that disapprobation which might have been expected of him. He must surely have known more of Maguire also than he had chosen to reveal, and in that respect, as perhaps in others, he (Robert) was still, therefore, it seemed only half trusted. On the other hand, his appointment, if it could be called such, of second in command to his patron was at least a proof of extreme favour, while to the fact that it was genuine, Murphy's own behaviour abundantly testified.

Neither on the next day nor for many days afterwards did Robert again see Mr. Kavanagh. That gentleman was once more reported ill, and remained in his berth visited only by Murphy and

Maguire. It would have doubtless been within the scope of Chesney's newly-conferred authority to insist on being admitted to the sick man's cabin; but he took no advantage of this. The same wild cries for "Help!" the same half-suffocated sounds were repeated as he had heard on the previous occasion, and something hinted to him that whatever might be the nature of his patron's seizures, the presence of an unaccustomed witness like himself would not be welcome to him. The ship's surgeon had attended the patient in the first instance, but of late he had not done so, since, as he explained to Robert, the two men in question thoroughly understood the case, and were competent to deal with it. The ship was by this time advanced far across the Indian Ocean, and was within a few hundred miles of the western coast of Australia, and the emigrants, no longer influenced by Maguire (whom Kavanagh's illness seemed to have greatly sobered, and who was much engaged about the sick man's person), and excited by the prospect of a termination to their tedious voyage, passed much of their time on deck, looking out for the first glimpse of land. Thus Robert made a more intimate acquaintance than he had hitherto done, not only with those under his own charge, but with the rest of his fellow-passengers, and was much struck with the difference

between them. The Tipperary boys, with their wives and families, gave but little thought to their future, appearing to leave that, with great contentedness, in the hands of their patron; while the others were never tired of speculating like children upon the new world they were so rapidly approaching, where potatoes grew without planting, and all were masters, and none servants. But just when they seemed to be on the point of realizing these brilliant visions, Fortune, which had hitherto so favoured the voyage of the *Star of Erin*, turned dead against her; a furious gale sprang up from the north-west, and drove the ship under bare poles hundreds of miles out of her course, at a pace she had never achieved when in full sail. The hatches had to be battened down, and the unhappy tenants of the steerage were reduced to a condition even worse than that in which they had been plunged at first: to the horrors of sea-sickness, were now added unspeakable terrors. In their dark and confined quarters, amid the howling of the tempest, and the straining of the ship's timbers, they looked for nothing less than death, from dawn to night, from night to dawn. This continued for many days, and when the wind slackened and the ship became once more under control, she was pronounced by the captain to be a greater distance from the desired

haven than she had been at the beginning of the gale. The sun, indeed, had once more reappeared; the sea, like some passionate domestic despot, who, having committed endless ravage in his wrath, is astonished, now that it is over, that any one should remember it, wore a thousand smiles; but the poor passengers huddled together on deck, and heart-sick with hope deferred, refused to be comforted, and believed themselves doomed to wander over the watery waste for ever. Curiously enough, the condition of Kavanagh had improved during the late commotion, and his first act, when circumstances permitted of an interchange of talk—which had been absolutely impossible during the gale—was to send for Robert, who, to his great surprise, found his patron up and dressed.

“Better, lad; yes, I am better,” said he, in answer to his congratulations; “but this bout has given me a lesson. If I had died, it would have been heavy on my conscience—which, alas! has its weight to bear already—that I should have left my sheep with a shepherd indeed, but without the means of pasturing them. Murphy, it is true, is as honest as this blessed sunlight that at last is shining on us again; but with all the good-will in the world to serve me, he has no head for management of any kind. Here are three thousand pounds in English

notes, of which you will take charge, taking care at the same time that nobody suspects you of being my banker except for current expenses. When occasion arises, you will make disbursements on our common account and on that of my poor people, which I will audit from time to time. Then, if anything should happen to me—I don't say I apprehend it, but I think it right to take precautions—I leave you my trustee and guardian in their interests: when you shall once have given them a fair start, the balance may be retained by yourself, or, what is better, given to your sweetheart, from one who never knew her, but who wishes her well, as her marriage portion.—It is my own property, man,” cried Kavanagh with sudden vehemence, and observing Robert to hesitate. “Do you suppose that I would give away what is *not* my own?”

“Indeed, sir, I was not thinking that at all,” answered Chesney earnestly, “but only of your great kindness and generosity: most sincerely do I trust that you may long live to expend this money to greater advantage, doubtless, than I should use; but it is a very large sum; and though such confidence cannot but be gratifying to me, the responsibility is great.”

“Nay, nay, lad,” said Kavanagh reassuringly;

"one can only do one's best, which I have no fear but that you will do. While as to the mere safety of the money, it will be more secure with you, since you will never be suspected of the possession of it, than with myself. I have had warnings that my life is at best a precarious one; and though I flatter myself, could I once escape from this cursed imprisonment, and set a free foot on land——What's that?"

A sudden turmoil had broken out on the deck above them; clappings of hands and shouts of joy were heard; and while they listened, the cabin-door was flung open by Murphy, who rushed in, in a wild state of excitement, crying, "Land, Land! Begorra, Mr. Frank, we're there."

"It is impossible," answered Kavanagh incredulously, rising from his seat, nevertheless, with an eager light in his eyes. "The captain told me only an hour ago that it would take us a week to make the coast."

"Sure the coast is ready-made then, for there it is, not half-a-dozen miles away. I've been up the mast-head to look, and there it lies all green and glorious like Ould Ireland herself, with just a bit of hill like the Hill of Howth growing out of the middle of it."

"The man is drunk," said Kavanagh contemptu-

ously. "Give me *your* arm, Robert, and help me on deck, that I may see with my own eyes."

The joy and excitement in Murphy's face faded as suddenly out as when the slide is withdrawn from a magic-lantern, and leaves the blank white sheet. "'Drunk,' am I?" muttered he, as he watched them go slowly out; "and 'give me *your* arm, Robert!' is it? Well, I obey you, Mr. Frank, and therefore obey *him*; but, Holy Moses! how I hate him." On deck, both passengers and crew had all assembled, and it was with some difficulty that Robert could make way for his companion through the crowd, to where the captain stood talking to one of the officers of the ship.

"What is it?" asked Kavanagh eagerly: "what is this nonsense about land?"

"I know no more than yourself," answered the captain coldly and ungraciously, as Robert thought, considering that he was addressing the most influential passenger on board his ship, and moreover a sick man. "That land it is, there is no doubt, as any glass will show you, but how it comes there, is more than I can tell. It is not in the chart, that's certain. Nor can it be the main-land, which lies more than five hundred miles to eastward."

Here a telescope was offered by some bystander, and Kavanagh endeavoured to adjust it, but whether

from excitement, or the weakness arising from his late illness, his hand was so unsteady that he could make no use of it. "There; do you take it, Robert," said he pettishly, "for I am too weak to hold it. Tell me what you see."

"It is land without doubt," answered Robert, and indeed, to the naked eye, what had seemed a dark cloud resting on the eastward horizon, was already assuming colour and consistency; "and if an island, it is a large one—large but low, except for one green hill in the centre; but I see no trace of trees."

"If this was in the Chinese waters," observed the firm but quiet voice of Maguire, "I should be at no loss to tell you what it was."

"Neither should I, if I were nearing the Needles," answered the captain contemptuously, "for then I should say it was the Isle of Wight."

"And that would be a very good guess for a home-voyager," answered Maguire coolly. "A man need only have been as far as Palermo, however, to see an island that has come up out of the sea, and here, if I am not much mistaken, is one of the same kidney. Off the Philippines I have seen half-a-dozen of them."

"You know a deal more about seafaring, Mr. Maguire, it seems to me, than when you first came

on board," remarked the captain significantly, and regarding the object of debate attentively through his glass; "and I don't mean to say that you mayn't be right as to this island. I have seen Nerita myself in the Mediterranean which sprang up, as you say, in a single night; but this has grass upon it, and looks a well-established concern enough. I only hope it has got fresh water, for we shall want it before many days are out."

"There is something shining like a silver thread," observed Robert, "and running down from the hill-side towards the sea: that must surely be a river."

Half-an-hour more resolved all doubts. The island in question, which had very deep water all about it (a circumstance that corroborated the idea that it was of volcanic origin), so that the ship could coast quite close to it, was of considerable dimensions. It was covered with such beautiful verdure as delighted and refreshed the sea-wearied eyes of all, and had at least two considerable streams of fresh water, still more welcome to the captain's view. A little bay on its more remote shore—the eastern one—formed a natural harbour, and into this the ship was steered and anchored. To see the enfranchised emigrants rush on shore, some rolling like dogs or horses for very joy upon the shining sward, some running along the shore as

though to convince themselves that they had at last the use of their legs, and all shouting with mirth, was like beholding a school on "breaking-up day." Kavanagh himself looked bright and hopeful as Robert had never seen him since they had set sail. "Murphy," said he, "I spoke to you harshly and unjustly a while ago. Put that down to my ill health, not to ill will. Come, let us take our first walk upon dry land together. Do you think that you and Robert, between you, could pull me up yonder hill?"

"One's plenty, Mr. Frank, for a job like that," answered Murphy eagerly: "just get astride upon my neck—so—that's well. There is not a mother yonder with a child in her arms that feels the burden as light as I do now." And before Robert could offer his assistance—which indeed he would have been loath to do, for Murphy's sake, who would certainly have deeply resented it—the faithful fellow had started for the hill with his master on his shoulders. Robert walked rapidly by their side, for no slow pace would have kept up with Murphy's giant strides, in readiness to give his aid should it be required; and in that order the three left the crowd and climbed the hill. Arrived at the top, Kavanagh descended from his human steed, who had showed no signs of weariness, and pro-

ceeded to survey this singular territory; his reconnaissance being supplemented by Robert's eyes, who used the glass. To the latter, accustomed to the thick foliage of the forest, the island looked bare and bald enough; but whatever its foundations might be composed of, the upper soil was evidently rich, and even at the elevation at which they stood far from rocky or barren. Its whole extent could not be less than ten miles long by eleven broad.

"It is quite a little kingdom in itself," murmured Kavanagh delightedly.

"*Then why should you not reign over it, Masther Frank?*" This rejoinder came from Murphy, and was a much more apt one than might have been expected from his lips; but it was characteristic of the man and of his relations with Kavanagh, that, whereas except for some gleams of humour which seemed themselves to be unconsciously uttered, he was for the most part dull and unready, it was often otherwise when speaking with reference to his patron's interests; his wits seemed sharpened by the anxiety he felt to further them; and though judgment was often wanting even then, readiness never failed him. The suggestion he now made, doubtless out of the abundance of his personal loyalty,

rather than with any serious idea of its being realized, seemed to strike Kavanagh amazingly.

"Reign over it!" exclaimed he, striking his palms together. "Why not? By Heaven! Dick, you have more wit than ten Maguires. Here is good soil, fresh water, and room to increase and multiply. Why not establish our own colony *here*, where no flag flouts the breeze, to remind us that we are still slaves as well as exiles?—Your judgment, Robert, is of the sober sort; what think you of the plan?"

"Well, sir, we can't eat grass, nor can the women and children lie on the bare earth"——

"There is no need for either," interposed Kavanagh enthusiastically. "We have provisions enough and to spare for months, as the captain told me. We have tents, too, and even houses that can be set up in a few hours. We have seeds in plenty, and agricultural implements of all sorts. I have money, too, far beyond what you imagine—for there was no need to tempt you with the knowledge of it, good lad, to follow my fortunes. Well, why should I not employ it to get all we need from the main-land—clothes, timber, cattle"——

"The whiskey is getting low," suggested Murphy delicately.

"Be serious, you omadawn.—Why not, Robert,

I say, use Melbourne as our store-house, but in other respects be independent of the world? The prospect seems a dream—a golden dream; but why should it not be realized? Why *should* I not be king, as Murphy puts it, and you prime-minister? Why shouldn't your Lizzy," he added in Robert's ear, "come out and marry you? A parson shall be imported for the very purpose, look you; there's my hand on it—and after my death you shall be king yourself, and all your progeny princes and princesses. Think of it, man—think of it!"

The air and tone of the speaker were wild and excited, beyond anything that Robert had yet seen in him; but the theme itself seemed to excuse it. Strange and fanciful, indeed, it was, but by no means ill adapted to win the ear of youth; and, moreover, there was no doubt, whatever might be the final success of the scheme, that it could be at least inaugurated. To Robert, it is true, it lacked the attraction which it possessed for his patron, in its restriction to his own people and dependants; but, on the other hand, here was a home assured for Lizzy and her kindred at the outset; while the idea of his wielding so large a personal influence in the new colony, both at present and in the future, was also, doubtless, not without its influence.

"Do you think your people would themselves

be in favour of such a plan?" inquired Robert doubtfully.

"Do I *think!* no; I am certain." And Murphy laughed a laugh that carried more conviction with it than even his master's words.

Robert himself, indeed, had little doubt that most, if not all, of Kavanagh's immediate followers would hail the plan with delight, and not at all the less so because of its romantic wildness; but still the natural prudence of his character, and his very knowledge that the temptation of Lizzy's immediate coming was having a greater weight with him than *all* other considerations, bade him pause.

"It matters not whether we prosper here or not," continued Kavanagh persuasively. "I shall get the captain to sell me a boat or two—one, at least, large enough to accomplish the voyage to Melbourne, from which place we could send over for the rest. Then all could start afresh, as we had originally intended to do. But I feel certain we shall prosper here. The captain has already taken the bearings of the island, and pronounced on the harbour very favourably: if we ourselves should not colonize it, be sure that others would. You were saying but a while ago how gladly you would welcome your friends the Alstons in the New World;

with how much greater pride can you now invite them to our own private territory! No money shall be spared by me to further your wishes as to their coming; and if the ship that brings them from England cannot be induced to steer a few days out of her course, a vessel shall be hired to bring them out from Melbourne immediately upon their arrival. It is a romance, my lad, I grant, from first to last; but there is no reason why it should not be a Romance of Reality."

The enthusiasm of the speaker's tone, the brilliancy of the future he depicted, the brightness and gaiety of the scene that lay stretched before them, combined together to sweep away Robert's last lingering doubts.

"So far as I can help you, Mr. Kavanagh," said he impulsively, "my services are altogether at your disposal, whether here or elsewhere."

"That's well, and spoken like yourself," cried the other. "For the present, then, they will be elsewhere. You must go on in the *Star* to Melbourne, and purchase all things that we may require; then return to us as soon as may be."

"I will do my best, sir," replied Robert hesitatingly; "but you speak as though the affair was settled. There are your people to be spoken to, and the captain"—

"Leave the people to me," answered Kavanagh smiling; "and as for the captain, you may take my word for it he will be glad enough to get rid of us.—And now, Murphy, there is one thing more to be done. Two hours ago, I doubted your word when you spoke of land in sight—I am now about to make you compensation——Do you happen to have a drop of whiskey in your pocket?"

"Have I a drop of blood in my body, do you mean, Masther Frank!" replied Murphy reproachfully, and producing from his coat a flask of the vintage of his native land.

Kavanagh placed it to his lips, and said, "I name this island *Murphy's Island*;" then took a deep draught.

"The honour is too much for the likes of me, Masther Frank," returned Dick; "I feel quite overcome by it, and must just take a sup myself.—Mr. Chesney, I drink your very good health, and a fair voyage to Melbourne." There was something cynical in Murphy's tone, which perhaps at any other time would have excited Robert's notice; but his mind was too full of the scheme he had just heard propounded, and the hopes or dreams which it had evoked, to pay any attention to so trifling a circumstance.

"Come, let us go down and clench this matter," cried Kavanagh impatiently; "for there is not an hour to lose." And they descended to the shore accordingly.

CHAPTER XIII.

Suspensions.

THE emigrants were harangued by the "young master" with all the effect that he had anticipated: exhausted with their long imprisonment, and delighted to find the green turf once more under their feet, they were unwilling to resume their voyage even for the few days that now remained of it; not only his own people, but a considerable minority of the other passengers elected to remain where they were, under Kavanagh's authority. The captain also, as he had predicted, seemed by no means indisposed to second their wishes; and, accordingly, the seeds and implements, the tents and dwelling-houses, intended for Australia, were disembarked, along with sufficient provisions to last the islanders for two months to come, long before which Robert might be expected back with stores of all sorts. Before an hour had passed, the island with its little hill had become like an ant's nest in the spectacle it presented of activity and business; and by nightfall it wore already the appearance of an infant colony.

It was clear warm weather, and most of the tenants of the steerage preferred to occupy their improvised residences on land, and even to camp out on the turf, rather than to remain in their close berths.

When all had been got out of the vessel that could well be spared, including even a couple of her boats, the pinnace and the gig (which had to be paid for very handsomely), and after four days of hard labour, wherein Robert Chesney was pronounced by the ship's carpenter to be the only man of the new colony who understood how to use his hands, the *Star* with her much diminished freight set sail for Melbourne. Robert had general instructions as to the articles he was to procure there, as well as ample funds for that purpose, but a great latitude was necessarily left to his own judgment. He had no person to whom to apply to assist his inexperience, except the captain, and, much to his surprise, that gentleman showed a strong disinclination to have anything to do with the matter. He had been very kind to Robert during the early portion of the voyage out; not only lending him books, as has been said, but taking some pains to teach him to box the compass, and even a little seamanship: but of late, his distrust and dislike of Maguire and his associates had seemed to extend in a less degree to Robert himself. Still it did seem strange

that he should refuse even such scant courtesy as a little good advice. However, so it was. "I have done Mr. Kavanagh's bidding," said he, "in helping him and his friends out of my ship, and I did it very gladly; but they and I have shaken hands, and I shouldn't fret if we never came across one another any more. No, sir; I should be very glad to do you a personal service, but I'll neither meddle nor make with their affairs; and since you are a friend of his, and his right-hand man, you had better not inquire what has made me come to that conclusion."

Robert was loyal to his patron, and felt the affront as though it had been put upon himself. His own explanation of the captain's ire was—first, that he had never forgiven the fugitive for having come on board the *Star* under false pretences, notwithstanding that two saloon fares had been paid for instead of one; and secondly, that Kavanagh's influence had not been exerted to the extent it might have been in quelling that disorder among his followers, which had, without doubt, at one time caused him (the captain) considerable anxiety. Robert was not inclined, however, to inquire if this was so, but kept much to the cabin, which Kavanagh had transferred to him, during the brief voyage, and employed himself in composing a long budget to Lizzy, wherein

he told her of all that had of late so strangely happened, and painted the new prospect of their future in the brightest colours. He greatly pressed the immediate emigration of the whole family by the next steamer, and inclosed—thanks to his patron's generosity—such a sum as would easily pay their passage to *Murphy's Island* by either of the two routes suggested.

He was so fortunate as to arrive in Melbourne on the very day on which the English mail started, and his letter went off by it accordingly. To know that the missive that was to bring his Lizzy to his arms was already on its way, and that every day would speed it, was an inexpressible comfort to him, while the duties that pressed upon his attention prevented the time of sweet expectancy from lagging. Moreover, the discovery of *Murphy's Island*—it was in 40 degrees 21 minutes south latitude, 123 degrees 4 minutes east longitude—excited not a little interest, which naturally concentrated itself upon the person intrusted with the victualing of the new colony; so that curiosity and self-interest together procured him more than enough of society. Working, in short, as diligently as he could, and sparing no expense to insure expedition, it was nevertheless fully six weeks before he found himself in possession of all that he had been commissioned

to procure, and got it embarked on board the sloop which he had hired for that purpose. It was a ship that had already an interest for him, for he had been informed, on application at the office of the mail-steamer, that passengers from England could not be taken to the island direct, and this very sloop would probably bring his Lizzy out from Melbourne, as it was now conveying himself. Its crew consisted of some half-a-dozen men beside the skipper, and one of them, as it happened, had belonged to the *Star of Erin*, which had sailed for England while he had been delayed (or so his story ran) by illness up the country. With this man Robert was naturally more familiar than with the rest; and on the day they started for their destination, and during some conversation about the stores, the former observed, "Well, whatever we shall find them short of when we reach the island, it won't be liquor."

The sailor's tone was so significant, that Robert was tempted to question him; when he learned that the *Star* had been laden with an unusual quantity of spirits, and that almost all of it had been purchased by Kavanagh for the use of the colony.

"But it seems only right," observed Chesney, "since the ship could be re-supplied at Melbourne,

that as much as possible should have been left in store on the island."

"No doubt, sir," answered the man, grinning, "if so be as it *has* been left in store, though, from what I have seen of our late ship-mates, they are not the ones to let good liquor spoil in the cellar."

This reply would not have caused Robert uneasiness, but that it had seemed to him that the amount of spirits which he had been commissioned to purchase, and which he was now bringing with him, was very large; while, if it was really true that the store was already sufficient for the colonists in that respect, it would be immensely in excess of their needs.

"Well, well," returned he, with an air of somewhat assumed indifference, "the cellar key will of course be taken care of, and the liquor only given out under proper restrictions."

"By the master, sir, or the butler?" inquired the other, with a most significant action of the left eyelid.

"What the deuce do you mean, man?" asked Robert angrily.

"Well, sir, I mean no offence," returned the other apologetically. "Only, that's what we—I mean we of the crew—used to call Mr. Kavanagh and his man: 'master and butler;' because they were such Lushingtons. I've known three bottles of whiskey go into Mr. Kavanagh's cabin of a morning, and come out empty before night. I dare say Murphy helped him, and Maguire too, for that matter; but to have D. T. for the second time during one voyage, well, that's doing it a leetle too fast. Of course, I thought you had known, sir, or I would not have mentioned it."

Robert was not so simple but that he had heard of *delirium tremens*, but until that moment he had been totally unaware that he had himself been a witness to a sufferer from that complaint. This, then, was the explanation of Kavanagh's cries for "Help!" and spectre-haunted gestures, and also of the disinclination of Murphy to admit him on such occasions to his master's cabin. A shadow seemed to fall upon his heart with the revelation; for how unstable, he reflected, must those fortunes be that, but a while ago had looked so fair, which rested on the caprice of an habitual drunkard! The vague but solemn warning of "Miss Mary," the foreboding farewell of Mistress Mulvaney, recurred to him now with novel force, and found at least their partial

interpretations. One thing, however, was certain—he had thrown in his lot with Kavanagh; and it was far too late—and indeed for the present impossible—to dissociate their fortunes.

CHAPTER XIV.

What Kavanagh had done.

ON the fifth day the sloop made the island; and its arrival was welcomed in the little harbour with evident satisfaction, yet, as it seemed to Robert, without the enthusiasm that might have been expected. There was an air of constraint about these usually frank and light-hearted people, which, under the circumstances, was quite unaccountable. Robert's first act would have been to go to Government House—as the only wooden erection of which the harbour boasted was facetiously termed, and from whose roof floated a huge green flag—to report himself to Kavanagh. "The Governor," however, he was informed, was not within; he had, it seemed, started with Murphy a few hours ago for another spot in his dominions upon the other side of the hill, and there was nothing for it but to proceed with the disembarkation of the stores. The livestock, which included sheep, goats, pigs, poultry, and even a few cows, excited such admiration as no golden medallist of a metropolitan cattle-show ever extorted; for these poor folk had been living

on salt junk for the last three months, and milk had been an unknown commodity even to the little children. It was no little disappointment to Robert, who was secretly conscious of having acquitted himself well as purveyor to the little commonwealth, that Mr. Kavanagh was not present during these proceedings; and when they were concluded, and such things as might suffer damage from exposure placed safely under cover, he was naturally impatient to see his patron, to whom Maguire offered to conduct him. The colony had been divided, it seemed, into two parts, in consequence of a "faction fight" that had already taken place between his "Tipperary boys" and the other members of the community; and the latter were located on the south side of the island in a settlement of their own, to which "the Governor" was now paying a visit, just as in disturbed districts "a royal progress" is sometimes made for the purpose of conciliation. On the way, Robert noticed with pleasure that some attempts at cultivation had been made, and not without success, for, though the agricultural knowledge of the community was for the most part confined to planting potatoes, or the sowing of mustard and cress, the soil was so fertile that you had but to "tickle it with a hoe and it straightway laughed in harvest." In a few years

it was plain that, with very moderate industry, *Murphy's Island* might be changed from a comparative desert to a spot not only self-supporting, but teeming with plenty. They were not long before they came in sight of New Town, as it was called, a little cluster of tents with one wooden house, from the roof of which a green flag was flying, similar to that which adorned the harbour.

"That is the sign of your vice-sovereignty," observed Maguire, in answer to Robert's inquiry. "I ought to have told you that it has been arranged that you are to live here. The New Town folks, you see, will have no objection to *you*, since you are not connected with our Tipperary lot; while, on the other hand, it would never have done to leave them without some representative of authority."

There was a cynicism in Maguire's tone which would not have escaped his companion, had his thoughts not been otherwise occupied; the news he had just heard was displeasing to him for a reason, which, however, he would have been ashamed to mention. He had pictured himself, as the time drew near for his Lizzy's arrival, rising every morning and sweeping the sea with his glass, to catch the first glimpse of the ship that was to bring her, and from New Town no such view could

be obtained, since the hill in the centre of the island obstructed it.

"It is immaterial where I live," observed Robert, "and, as you say, these good folks owe me no ill-will: but I hope Mr. Kavanagh has come to no harm by venturing hither; it is but an hour's walk from the harbour, and I can't understand what has detained him."

"Oh, the Governor is safe enough," answered Maguire carelessly; "it is quite likely he has gone back the other way, which is a good long round."

"Then he must be in much better health than when I left him!" exclaimed Robert.

Maguire returned no answer.

They had come in sight of a knot of men lounging and loafing in the sunshine, at the entrance of the village, looking certainly idle enough, but not so happy as idleness was wont to make them. Perhaps they had been to blame in the late disturbance, and regretted the part they had taken in it; but, at all events, Robert observed the same subdued air, though in a somewhat mitigated degree, that he had noticed in the people at the harbour. At the sight of Chesney, they rose and ran to meet him. From the southerly position of their settlement, they had been unable, as he had fore-

seen, to perceive the approach of the sloop, and its arrival was unknown to them.

Having answered their questions, Robert inquired, in his turn, whether "the Governor," as Kavanagh was gravely termed, was in the village.

"No, indeed," said they; "why, he has been ill for weeks."

Robert turned to Maguire in blank astonishment.

"That's so," said the latter coolly; "I'll tell you all about it when we get within-doors."

The wooden house which had been set apart for Robert's residence was the only one in New Town to which that phrase "within-doors" could have been applied; and since such of the people as had not at once started for the harbour on the news of the sloop's arrival were now crowding about him and his companion, they hastened to take advantage of the privacy it afforded. It was but a two-roomed cabin, yet it was very neatly and even comfortably furnished in sea-fashion, thanks to Kavanagh's long purse, and the acquiescence of the captain of the *Star*; but, for the moment, Robert was far too indignant to observe this evidence of his patron's kindness, and could think only of the deception that had been practised on himself.

"And, now we are alone, Mr. Maguire," exclaimed he impatiently, "be so good as to explain to me for what reason I have thus been made a fool of; or is it for the mere pleasure that you may chance to take in telling a lie?"

"Sit down, my good sir," said Maguire quietly, himself taking a chair, "for to tell you all will be a long story. I have told you a lie, no doubt; but that is because, from the experience I have had of you, I did not think you strong enough to bear the truth. I have sounded you during our late voyage together a dozen times, and though you have doubtless done credit to your teaching (against which I have nothing to say, except that it doesn't suit my views), the result has been in every case disappointment. You have no ambition; you have no sense of independence; and you can only think in a groove. Yes, lad; you have sense and spirit, and had you shown a disposition to back me, in a matter to which there is now no need to allude, we might all, instead of ending our days on this beggarly island, have had all this side of the world to choose from, and a good ship of our own to take us whither we would."

"You rascal, I believe you would have had us all turn pirates!" exclaimed Robert, striking the table with his hand.

"Perhaps," answered Maguire coolly. "But wishes unfulfilled are not crimes, I believe, at least in this life, though some good folks have affixed a penalty to them in the next. You are, I see, recalling to your mind the delicate hints that I used to drop upon this subject; my endeavours to make myself agreeable to the poor fools below-stairs; the disfavour with which the gallant captain of late regarded me; and other little matters. But let us not waste time either on regrets or self-congratulations. The point is, that here we are, and we are not pirates."

"Nay," answered Robert firmly, "the point is rather, that however you might have succeeded in imposing upon your own poor ignorant people, you would not have gained a man with a head on his shoulders, or a heart in his breast, to join in so mad and atrocious a scheme. Not one of them, in the first place, would have moved a finger without their master's bidding; and you will never persuade me that a gentleman like Mr. Kavanagh, however imprudent and misguided, would have consented to become a thief and a murderer"—

"One moment," interposed Maguire, laying his finger on Robert's arm: "by a most singular and unusual accident to have occurred during a flight of virtuous eloquence, you have chanced to hit the

nail on the head with your sledge-hammer. What would you say if I was to let you know that *Mr. Kavanagh is a murderer already?*”

“I should say that you are a liar, and in point of fact I *do* say it,” answered Robert hotly.

“Very good; that shows your spirit. There have indeed been days—and not so long ago—when I would have shot a man dead for saying less; but let that pass. I want to come to an understanding with you, my lad, and not to quarrel; and besides, it is your very pluck that makes me wish, I don’t say for your friendship, lest it should offend you, but your alliance. I must still request you to listen to me, even though you may disbelieve my assertions; but the proofs of what I say shall be forthcoming before you leave this room. Mr. Frank Kavanagh had, as you know, a younger brother Lewis; they were born of the same mother, but under circumstances that made the younger the heir, and the elder penniless. Mr. Kavanagh, senior, did not marry his wife until after Frank’s birth, whereby the boy was rendered illegitimate, though only a few persons were aware of the fact, either at that time or afterwards. The old man liked Frank best, as indeed did everybody; though wild and impulsive, he was generous and warm-hearted; and even the political scrapes he got into (which

were very serious) seemed, in his father's eyes, who sympathized with their objects, but the result of youthful enthusiasm. To the tenants of the estate they endeared him; and even from Lewis they never received any direct discouragement (although he held aloof from them) until after the old man's death. It was not till long after Frank had grown up that his father revealed to him the fact of his illegitimacy, and I dare say the revelation did not help to sober him, or to heal the disagreements which already existed between his better-fortuned brother and himself. Of these latter, however, the old man was not very cognizant, or, at all events, attached to them less importance than they deserved. However his sons might differ in politics, he thought they would be loyal to one another; and especially that Lewis, who was always full of professions of duty and principle, would take care to see his wishes carried out with respect to Frank after his own death, just as if they had the force of law. He could indeed have left his elder son provided for in his will, but not without the exposure of the shame of his dead mother; so, in the presence of both his sons, and with Frank's full consent, he stated how he desired them to share his property. His English estate of Falston, which was much larger than that he possessed in Ireland, he gave to

Lewis, who disliked the latter country, to which, on the other hand, his brother was devoted. To make up for this unequal distribution, and also because he foresaw that Frank's revolutionary tendencies might one day cause him to need ready money wherewith to make himself a home in the New World, he left him a large sum (which he always kept by him in notes at Falston, for the very purpose to which it was afterwards applied), as well as the estate in Tipperary. Lewis promised solemnly that this arrangement should hold good after his father's death, just as if it had been so devised by will; and so the brothers parted company, never, I believe, to meet again but *once*. Frank to recommence his desultory existence, made up of attempts at art, attempts at politics—assisted in the latter by the devotion of such poor tools as you see here. Frank Kavanagh was honest; his people were faithful, but they could not discover the way to the moon. Moreover, there were some people who objected even to the experiment being tried. His plots, harmless to the government, against which they were directed, were dangerous to himself; he had to use disguises, aliases, and houses that had back-doors to them; while Lewis lived with his father at Falston Hall, a model son, with an eye to the county magistracy. When the old man died,

Frank was in hiding, and, as Lewis pretended, could not, therefore, be communicated with; but, at all events, the first hint he received of the fact was from the stoppage of his own allowance, followed by the information that his brother had taken possession of the whole paternal estate, as he had undoubtedly a legal right to do. On the same evening, Frank Kavanagh, with Murphy, rode down from town to Falston Hall. What happened there, I can pretty well guess; but if you like to see the account of it as written by the penny-a-liners, here it is." Maguire drew a newspaper from his breast-pocket, and threw it across the table. "*The murder at Falston Hall* is what they call it, you see."

"I see," gasped Robert, looking from that ghastly heading to the date of the newspaper, which was the same as that on which he had visited Herne Street. Oh, why, when Denton had offered it to him *then*, had he declined to read it?

"How you could be ignorant of what had taken place," continued Maguire, "was always a marvel to me; for if you had missed the papers, yet being in town, how could you have helped reading *this*, which was on every blank wall in London?"

From the same packet he took out a hand-bill, and spread it out upon the table:

£200 *REWARD*.— *The above reward will be paid for the apprehension of Frank Kavanagh, charged with the Wilful Murder of his brother, Lewis Kavanagh, of Falston Hall, Esquire.*

It was the same notice which had been pasted opposite to Robert's window at Mulvaney's, but of which he had only read the first few words when it was torn down by Murphy. Now the whole truth flashed upon him: the broadsheet seller of the previous night had proclaimed the full particulars, though the widow and he in the smoke-room had caught them but indistinctly: he had missed the name, and had taken for *suicide* what without doubt had been *fratricide*. Murphy had prevented his going out to buy the broadsheet, and had invented an excuse for not obtaining it himself, in order to conceal the terrible truth. With Robert, who had had the encounter with the patrol in his mind, and had no suspicion of any other catastrophe, he had succeeded, even after the former had seen the handbill, since he set that down to the same account; but the widow he had been unable to deceive, and hence their quarrel respecting Kavanagh. She had been blind to his failings, tender to his faults, but she could not, like his faithful henchman, excuse his crimes. "I don't wish to see him, Murphy," she

had said, when he had spoken of the young master's wishing her farewell, "either here or elsewhere, but least of all under my own roof." And the reason was now only too evident: she had shrunk from taking his blood-stained hand in hers. From the moment she knew that he had taken his brother's life, all regard for him had died out in her; or only just so much remained as prevented her from proclaiming his crime. To Robert she had maintained an icy silence, the coldness of which had not escaped his notice, though he had never guessed its cause.

CHAPTER XV.

Maguire's Ultimatum.

THE revelation of this view of his patron was to Robert in itself sufficiently overwhelming, but what was still more terrible was the reflection, "And with this man I have cast in my lot, and not only mine, but Lizzy's!" In the bitterness of his heart he groaned and bowed his face between his hands.

"Come, come, look up," cried Maguire encouragingly; "it is no use hiding one's head like an ostrich, to escape from an inevitable position. You called me a liar, you know, and that perhaps made me acquaint you with these little particulars more abruptly than was judicious. You believe me *now*, I suppose; or will do so when you have read that newspaper?"

"Take it away!" ejaculated Robert, with a gesture of loathing; "I am convinced enough."

"Now, that is what I call a proof of sense," observed Maguire, in a congratulatory tone. "The object of a newspaper writer is, of course, to harrow the feelings; and therefore, when you want any

dramatic incident communicated to you in a delicate way, it is better to trust to a friend. What happened at Falston, stripped of cant and sensation, was, as I understand, something of this kind: the brothers had a private interview, in which Frank talked of his mother's memory and his father's dying wishes, and Lewis listened, not with very particular attention, his thoughts being probably entirely engrossed by his own affairs; but when the question was directly put to him, 'Are you going to fulfil the promise that you gave our father in my presence, with regard to the distribution of his property, or do you intend to take the whole, since the law awards it you?' I have not the least doubt that he replied, with great distinctness, 'I mean to take the whole.' Perhaps he added (for he was a consummate hypocrite), that painful as it was to him to arrive at this determination, he had done so no less on public grounds than private, inasmuch as he should deem it dangerous to the state to intrust a man of 'dear Frank's' revolutionary sentiments with the means to carry them into practical effect. At all events, whatever he said, he said too much. Frank's head had long been 'going:' from a child, he was subject to paroxysms of passion, which, compared with what people call 'temper,' were as a tornado to a capful of wind; and of late years they had

been growing worse and worse. He had begun to drink, too, though not to the extent that he drinks now. You must forgive him *that*, since it is done, I fancy, to drown the remembrance of the event which I am now about to relate, and for which he is so foolish as to entertain remorse. Well, being in this hot-headed state, and excessively exasperated, while the other was contemptuous and arrogant, there is no wonder that there were high words; then—I don't know who struck them first, that is a nice question for the lawyers—then blows. In the end ensued a dreadful rough-and-tumble, out of which Lewis never came at all, for he was left dead on the hearth-rug, with the front lock of his brother's hair in his hand, which he had torn up by the roots. The reason Frank always wears a skull-cap is to conceal that wound; and now you know why the officer at Liverpool was so careful to pass his hand over everybody's head who at all resembled Kavanagh. The disguise he had assumed as Denton, however, pulled him safely through that ordeal, which was fortunate for the inspector also, who would, without doubt, have shown his sagacity at the expense of his life. After the trouble and pains that Murphy and the rest of us had been at to get the young master safely on board the *Star*, and surrounded by his own friends, it is not likely that

we would have let him be snatched from their hands at the moment of escape."

"But he is not safe *now*," ejaculated Robert: "directly he disclosed who he was, he surely became liable to apprehension, even on board the *Star*!"

"No doubt," observed Maguire grimly; "if there had been anybody fool enough to apprehend him. It is more than likely, however, that the captain was himself ignorant of the serious character of Kavanagh's crime; and, at all events, he knew that he had become irresponsible for it."

"Irresponsible for it! How could that be?"

"Because," answered Maguire, leaning across the table, and speaking in hushed tones, "the man is *mad*, mad as a March hare five days out of every six; and, when drunk, always mad. You saw him once yourself in the latter state, and thought it was D. T., I suppose. Well, so it was; but it was something else besides. He was going through the whole performance that took place at Falston, as he often does. '*There, there he stands with his strangled face!*' he cries. '*He struck me first; I'll swear it.*' And then, '*Help, help!*' the echo of the cry his brother gave, or perhaps his own terrified call to Murphy, when the knowledge of what he had done first forced itself upon him."

"Poor miserable man!" exclaimed Robert pityingly.

"Well, no, not *poor*," answered Maguire coolly. "The one sensible thing that Frank Kavanagh ever did, or rather which (as I shrewdly guess) Murphy did for him, was to carry off from Falston Hall that parcel of bank-notes which his father had designed for him, and always kept in his desk ready for an emergency—though he little guessed of what sort the emergency would be. I believe this amounted to many thousand pounds, from which we on *Murphy's Island* have already reaped the benefit."

"You think, then, that Mr. Frank was mad, or nearly so, before the aggravation of his brother's meanness made him lose all command over himself and commit this terrible deed?" observed Robert, shocked by the revelation of his patron's crime, and genuinely anxious to believe him guiltless of it.

"I believe he was always crack-brained," answered Maguire coolly ("though his friends used to call it enthusiasm), and that the fissure has been growing wider and wider."

"And yet," urged Robert, "on all occasions on which I have seen him, save one, he has appeared sane enough."

"You have seen him in lucid intervals, and be-

sides, the voyage itself greatly benefited him for the time; but since he has been ashore here, matters have been infinitely worse: remorse and drink together have undermined the remainder of his wits, and they have fallen in, higgledy-piggledy."

"Then, if he was to be sent for from England, and taken prisoner, you don't think he could"—Robert hesitated, for he did not forget that Kavanagh had been uniformly kind to him, and had trusted to his bare word in the weightiest matters.

"Don't think he could be *hanged*? you were going to say, man. No, he could not be hanged, if that is any sort of satisfaction to you. But what interests me greatly more than that far-off contingency is, how his madness is likely to affect us in the mean time. There is no lunatic asylum on Murphy's Island; and if there were, it would be as much as our lives were worth to attempt to shut him up in it. For Murphy will never believe, even when he sees him raving, that his master is anything more than a little eccentric, and would obey his wildest mandate rather than the advice of the sagest of men; while as for the tag-rag and bob-tail over at the harbour yonder, they will believe anything that Murphy tells them. For all we know, when the fit is on him, Kavanagh may give orders

for our immediate execution, as indeed has happened to one poor wretch already."

"You don't mean to say that he put a man to death?" exclaimed Robert in horrified accents.

"Indeed, I do, though. He was tried by a sort of court-martial for trying to make off with the 'gig'—it is now made a capital offence, by-the-by, to leave the island without Kavanagh's permission—and they strung him up in front of Government House. As it happened, it was only a Tipperary boy, but it might have been you or me. Well, all this brings me round to the matter which I had in my mind when I brought you over to New Town. The people here are not quite such fools as they are at the harbour; *there*, the boys are so entirely under Murphy's thumb, that they did not dare to whisper to you that the governor was ill, whereas *here*, you were informed of it, as you remember, readily enough; and, moreover, I am glad to say, they have had a disagreement with one another. Now, 'When fools quarrel, wise men come by their own,' says the proverb, or something to that effect. And now perhaps you see at what I have been driving?"

"Not exactly; no, I confess I don't," said Robert suspiciously. His former interest in, and even regard for, Maguire was indeed swept away. The

circumstances in which they were now placed no longer admitted of his looking upon that personage as a harmless nonentity: the calm and almost approving manner in which he had narrated this story of Cain and Abel had shocked the lad to the core; what he had taken for candour in the man, he now perceived to be an unblushing recklessness; he feared his sanity almost as much as Kavanagh's madness.

"You are duller than you are wont to be, Master Chesney," observed Maguire. "Why, is it not clear that you and I are the only two men on this island with brains in their head, save one who has them muddled? If this madman and his man were out of the way, the rest, look you, would be our subjects."

"Granting that," answered Robert quietly, "for the sake of the argument: how do you propose to persuade Mr. Kavanagh and Murphy to leave the island?"

"I think I *could* persuade them," answered Maguire with a cold smile. "At all events, you may leave that matter to me. I have influence with both factions, and you are not disliked by either; moreover, you will have the advantage of such authority as Kavanagh may leave behind him. Why should we not make alliance and reign together

peaceably over this little territory? I don't pretend to conceal from you that if you had more spirit, or had not been spoilt by a mawkish bringing-up, that I should have proposed a bolder game—such as I very nearly persuaded Kavanagh to play.”

“You would have revived the days you spent on board the *Mother Carey*, on shore, I presume?” said Robert in as indifferent a tone as he could compass.

“I would, by Heaven!” answered Maguire roundly. “We could have had our own ship in yonder harbour, and done a good trade, of which no one would have suspected us; and when folks in little vessels dropped in upon us by accident, we should have welcomed them so warmly that they would never have gone away. But you are not fit for such bold strokes, so I think of them no longer. We must be content to call this isle our own, and to have no masters, which is no small thing in these days. You, I hear, are expecting your sweetheart from England”—In spite of himself, here Robert could not repress a shudder; how terrible had the bare idea become of bringing his Lizzy to such a spot; too horrible even to think of, but that he had already formed a plan in his own mind by which such a catastrophe should be averted.

“Well, I have also fixed my affections upon a

young lass from King's County," continued Maguire; "to be sure they are not at present returned, but no doubt they will be, when I can call myself co-governor. Altogether, the prospect seems to me very fair and promising for us both, but especially for yourself, who are far the younger man, and will have the sole command when I am underground, or feeding the fishes. So stands my offer, lad, in return for your alliance. I regret to add—but then it is so much better to be explicit—that if you should decline it, there is an unpleasant reverse to the picture. I have still the ear of the governor, when at least he can be got to listen to anybody, and also the confidence of Murphy; and I have only to whisper that this ambitious scheme has sprung from your own head, instead of mine, to make you dance in the air in front of Government House. Just think over the whole matter, lad, and then answer me 'Yes' or 'No.'" Here Maguire lit his pipe, leant back in his chair, and began to occupy himself with the newspaper, so as not to interfere with his young friend's deliberations. Robert had already made up his mind as to his future course of conduct, but he thought it better to appear undecided, and to temporize as much as possible.

"Indeed, Mr. Maguire," returned he, after a con-

siderable pause, "all that you have told me is so strange and unlooked-for, that I must be forgiven for saying that I can promise nothing until I have satisfied myself of the facts you have narrated with my own eyes and ears. Until I have convinced myself that Mr. Kavanagh is mad, I don't see how you can reasonably expect me to deny him my allegiance."

"That would be well enough in a believer in the Divine Right of kings," observed Maguire carelessly, "but in a person of such delicate moral scruples as yourself, the fact of his having committed a double murder ought to weigh somewhat, I should have thought, against his authority. However, there is no hurry about anything in *Murphy's Island*, and you have only to see its governor, to be convinced of what I have told you about him. Preserve your decision till to-morrow, or the next day, for that matter, and then tell me frankly whether we are to be friends or foes." The tone of the speaker was still one of conciliation; but he spoke with knitted brows, and with the air of one who is putting a strong restraint upon himself; moreover, there was a suspicious searching glance in his keen gray eyes, that bespoke but little confidence in the decision, which he had requested, proving favourable to his views.

"Well," added he, rising, "I shall now leave you to make yourself at home in your new house. You will be over at the harbour before night, I dare say; and in the mean time, good-bye to you."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Constitution.

YES; Robert certainly intended to be over at the harbour before night. It was his fixed resolve to seek an interview with Kavanagh as soon as might be, and whether he found him in the condition Maguire had described or not, to take passage to Melbourne the next morning by the ship that had brought him thence. With a murderer, whether sane or mad, he would have no part nor lot, and above all, he would take care that Lizzy should never set foot upon that perilous shore. The only doubt now left in his mind as to his future conduct was whether he should acquaint the authorities in Australia with the state of affairs on Murphy's Island. In justice to its colonists, now subject to the caprices of a mad despot, and fated in all probability to become the prey of an unscrupulous schemer, it was clearly his duty so to do; and yet he shrank from the ingratitude that such an act would involve, for how could he describe what had occurred without denouncing his benefactor and

patron! As to acceding to the infamous proposition of Maguire, his nature revolted at it. He believed that the man's hint of being able to "persuade" Kavanagh and his faithful follower to quit the island, meant nothing less than that they were to be put to death; and even if he could have been so base and vile a traitor, he had little doubt that he himself, having served his confederate's selfish ends, would in turn have become his victim.

In order to give his late companion ample time to precede him to the harbour, rather than with any interest in the investigation itself, he went over his little home, and was both surprised and touched to find in it many indications both of the good-will and generosity of Kavanagh. The furniture, and even the decorations, of the saloon cabins of the *Star*, had evidently been laid under lavish contribution to supply his needs; and if Government House should prove to be equipped proportionally to the residence of the second in command, its interior at least would not greatly belie its ambitious designation. For his own part, however, he was to reap no advantage from this splendour, which also filled him with remorseful tenderness towards him by whose forethought it had been provided. With a heavy heart he left the house, and was at once surrounded by such of the population of New Town—

mostly women and children—as the news of the arrival of the stores had not attracted to the other settlement. Among the former, he noticed the black-eyed, gipsy-faced young girl from King's County, upon whom Maguire had deigned to bestow his to-be-one-day enviable affections. Robert had noticed her himself on board the *Star*, not only from her beauty, but because of the likeness to the “Miss Mary” of Herne Street, whom (although she was much younger) in her general appearance she greatly resembled. Her age could not have much exceeded sixteen, and she had still about her all the glow and radiance of childhood. His heart sunk within him as he heard her merry laugh, and listened to her thoughtless words, for the reflection forced itself upon him:—“If I should spare Kavanagh, will it not be eventually at the sacrifice of this bright and innocent girl?”

Escaping from the questions and welcomings of the throng as soon as he could, he breasted the central hill, resolving to take that way to the harbour, in preference to the shorter and easier road by which he had come, in order to avoid the possibility of overtaking Maguire, whose companionship he now felt to be intolerable. At the summit, he paused, not for breath, for the elevation to his young limbs and lungs was insignificant enough,

but to survey the ocean, which had of late acquired an interest for him which it had lacked before. "In three months' time," thought he, "or four at furthest, the ship that brings my darling to the home I trust I shall by that time have made for her, will be speeding yonder on her course." And even while he looked, his heart bounded within him, for there, in truth, but a few miles off, there *was* a ship, and steering, so far as he could judge, for Melbourne. The next moment he blushed at his own folly, for how *could* it be the ship in question, since even that which carried his summons to the Alstons had not yet arrived in England! However, taking out a pocket-glass with which he had provided himself in Melbourne, he scanned the vessel with some interest, which increased as he gazed to intense excitement. He was not much versed in seamanship, but surely, surely that was the very sloop in which he had himself arrived but a few hours ago! The harbour was concealed under the hill, but he ran forward quickly until he could command it, and then his worst suspicions were confirmed: the sloop which it had been definitely arranged was to have waited until the morrow, was already gone!

It was for this, then, perhaps, that he had been enticed to visit New Town! His idea of taking

passage at once to Melbourne had been anticipated, whether by Maguire or others, and thus forestalled. If it was so, the misfortune was indeed overwhelming, for how could he warn Lizzy of her danger in coming to the island? Had it been arranged that the mail was to bring her, he could have carried her on to Melbourne in it, despite all opposition; but the crew of this little sloop could not control the force that the islanders could bring against them, and being in the pay of Kavanagh, were of course subject to his orders. Indeed, it must be in obedience to them that they had now altered their intention of remaining the night, and set sail for home.

The pinnace, it is true, and the gig still lay in harbour; but the former needed at least three men to navigate her; and the latter was a mere cockleshell, quite unfit to face the open sea. Moreover, had it not been enacted that it was death to embark in either of them without Kavanagh's express permission, a penalty, which, unless Maguire had told a falsehood capable of immediate refutation, had been already carried out to its extremity. His position, under every aspect, was indeed growing gloomy and serious, and it was with a heavy heart that Robert resumed his way towards the harbour. For the present, he was alone in his peril; how

much more terrible would the situation be if Lizzy should arrive to share his fate—perchance his doom!

“Government House,” though a structure of absurdly insignificant size to have so grand a title, was a well-built and compact edifice; it was two stories high, and contained eight rooms, yet every piece of timber of which it was composed had a number and place of its own, and fitted into its neighbour piece like the joints of a child’s puzzle. In Australia, though house-room might be dear, and difficult to obtain, this costly toy—which was painted and fitted up with infinite elaborateness—would have been out of place, if not superfluous, and only have ministered to its possessor’s vanity; but on Murphy’s Island, by a singular chance, it had found its proper function. Contrasted with the tents around it, and with the more humble dwellings which were already being erected at the harbour out of the timber which Robert had brought over with him from Melbourne, and with the gay banner floating from its flagstaff, it had a lordly, if not a sovereign air. Moreover, as though in mimicry of royal state, one of the Tipperary “boys,” pike in hand, was strutting sentrywise to and fro in front of its door.

“Is the master within, Tim?” asked Robert of

this consequential personage, with whom, of course, he was well acquainted.

"He's in, sir; yes. But Murphy says that he can be seen by none of his people."

"But that does not include *me*, I suppose?" said Robert persuasively. "Besides, I have important matters to transact with him, Tim."

Tim lowered his pike, scratched his head with the point of it, and deliberated gravely within himself. He had had his orders, but were they to be put in effect with respect to the master's own lieutenant?

"Well, you can just step in, Mr. Chesney, and ask him yourself whether he wishes you to be admitted or not."

Without stopping to question Tim's logic, Robert opened the door, and stepped within. The atmosphere, charged with tobacco-smoke, and tinctured with the smell of spirits, reminded him of the little room at Mulvaney's; it didn't smell like a new house at all, though everything to the eye was spick and span.

"Who's that?" inquired a harsh voice from above-stairs. Then Murphy's shock-head appeared over the banisters. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Chesney," added he in a hoarse whisper. "The master is ill, sir, and can't be seen."

"Come up!" roared another voice from an upper room, in such excited tones, that Robert hardly recognized them as belonging to Kavanagh. "Come up hither, and bring another bottle of whiskey, Robert, for we are half through this one already."

Murphy, as usual, at once withdrew his opposition to his master's wishes, and only held up his fore-finger in warning of Robert knew not what, as the latter obeyed the summons.

In a front room, handsomely furnished, and close to a round table on which were glasses and a bottle, sat Frank Kavanagh, looking years older than when Chesney had seen him last, and with that blotched unhealthy flush upon his face which, unlike that resulting from fresh air and exercise, suggests a protracted and deep debauch. His eyes were blood-shot, and regarded the new-comer without disfavour indeed, but without a particle of the interest that under the circumstances might have been expected; and his dishevelled hair, no longer covered by a skull-cap, displayed above the forehead a bald scar, the sight of which sent a shudder through Robert's frame; for was it not the mark of Cain!

"Sit down, lad.—Dick, bring a fresh glass," exclaimed Kavanagh. "Well, thank Heaven, that sloop's gone, and here we are all alone once more in our own little island!" Then, breaking out into a song:

"Oh, it's a bright little island—
A right little, tight little island!
Search the globe round, none can be found
So happy as this little island."

"I hope it may be a happy one, sir," observed Robert quietly.

"Hope, lad! I say it *is*, and I'm master here, I believe.—Isn't that so, Dick?"

"True for you," answered Murphy gravely; "you're the king of us all, sure."

"Then why does this mealy-mouthed gentleman talk about his *hopes*?" resumed the other with irritation. "If my people are not happy here, I'll know the reason why. And, look you, happy or not, they shall go nowhere else"—he brought his fist down on the table with an emphasis that made the glasses ring again—"nowhere else, so help me Heaven, save to the dickens.—Fishing? No; they shall not so much as fish, unless I give them my royal permission so to do. That was why I hanged Pat Doolan: to encourage the others not to go fishing in the gig without my leave. And as for the pin-nace, it is never to be used without my written order, my imperial ukase. You're my second in command, sir, so look to *that*." The tragic air and stilted manner of the speaker were such as would have fitted the mock-sovereign of a burlesque, or some self-satisfied inmate of the walls of Bedlam;

but there was a certain significance in his words, too, that jarred upon his hearer worse than their mere jangling wildness. This tirade about the boats, as it struck Robert, was intended to apply to his own case, and serve as a personal warning.

"I shall obey your directions, sir, of course," answered he respectfully. "But as for quitting the island, as I suppose you hint at, that would not be very practicable in the gig, at all events; and to hang a man for going out to fish seems to me to be hard measure."

"Seems to you?" answered Kavanagh menacingly. "And what is that to *me*? When I ask my minister's opinion, he may give it; but not unasked. The power of life and death is the king's prerogative. Murphy and I are drawing up the statutes of the island, and that is the first article of our constitution. To speak against the king, or to discuss his acts with strangers, has been also made a capital offence. We put them in after Pat's death, lest the crew of the sloop should come to hear of it, and that exercise of my undoubted authority be subsequently questioned elsewhere. It is a great power, look you, lad, and makes one draw a proud breath to be able to say 'Death' to any man who doesn't suit one's fancy. To open to him, as it were by a word, the gates of Eternity. Yes, yes. The mis-

chief is, however," added the speaker, with a puzzled air, "that one can't get the fellow back again when one wishes it. And one does wish it sometimes, oh, one *does*." His head drooped gently on his hand, his tones became soft and tender, and his feverish eyes filled with tears. "I had a brother once, lad; we were boys together; I can remember saying my prayers with him at our mother's knee. But he would take out the boat and fish, contrary to our express injunction; and—the king must administer justice quite indifferently, you know—and poor Lewis paid for it with his life.—Didn't he, Dick?"

The tone of his appeal was very sad and touching, but not more so than the expression of Murphy's answering look. It seemed to say, "Oh, what has happened to my beloved master? His wild words make me tremble to hear them, and yet I will never, never, never think him mad!"

"Don't talk of *that*, Mr. Frank," answered the other cheerfully. "Let us speak of other things. You have never said a word to Mr. Chesney, you know, respecting his stay in Melbourne, and the cargo he brought over with him."

"Yes, indeed, sir," observed Robert, "I should wish to account to you, as soon as you have the

leisure, for the money intrusted to me. I have expended nearly the whole of it, but I hope in such a manner as you will approve."

"Yes, yes; I have seen it all, and I do approve. There is whiskey enough to supply our royal cellar for—well, one week at least. That is why the man keeps guard over us with a pike—to keep off thieves, and to knock in the head of a cask whenever it is wanted. Isn't that so, Dick?"

Murphy muttered some inarticulate reply, which, by the cheerful nod that accompanied it, would seem to be in the affirmative; but that devoted follower was evidently in sad straits.

"By-the-by, Robert," continued Kavanagh, his changeful manner, which had been fierce, pathetic, and humorously cynical by turns, becoming suddenly delicately courteous, "you have spoken of the cargo, but not of the passengers. You have not said one word about your Lizzy. Why did you not bring her here to see me? I wish above all things to welcome my friend's wife to *Murphy's Island*, and especially to introduce her to Mary. The Governor's wife, you know, must call upon the Deputy-governor's, that is a constitutional necessity. She will go in state, upon a white elephant, if the animal is procurable. But in the mean time the young women

should be friends. You have seen my Mary, of course?"

"Yes," replied Robert, hesitating; "but I did not know"—he was going to add, "that she was on the island," when Kavanagh broke in triumphantly,

"There! he has seen her, Murphy, with his own eyes; and yet you try to persuade me that she is not at New Town. Go away, Dick, go away, and leave me with Mr. Chesney, to arrange our pecuniary accounts, about which your poor stupid head can understand nothing.—The poor fellow is losing what little wits he has, Chesney, and positively tries to persuade me that my own Mary, who has followed me here so faithfully from England, is a girl from King's County. A pretty thing, indeed, that a man should not know his own sweetheart. And there were others too—that fellow Maguire for one—who were in the same tale. But yours is independent testimony. Hush! not a word; I thank you for it. Empty titles are not to be created under my dynasty; but I give you in reward a solid privilege. You shall go fishing in the gig within the circuit of half a mile, to which our jurisdiction extends.—Put that down, Murphy; it shall form the seventeenth article of the constitution. But there, you cannot write. Give *me* the parchment. Given at the Government

House—that is our royal style—&c. &c. There, you are free to take the boat and fish, provided only, that if you should catch sturgeon, it must be reserved for our own table.”

During all this rodomontade, Robert maintained a respectful silence; he had endeavoured to explain the mistake into which Kavanagh had fallen with respect to “Miss Mary;” but the former had refused to listen to it; and was it now worth while (even if it was possible) to set this poor madman right in so absurd a matter, especially, too, as the misunderstanding had brought forth such welcome fruit? For in the gig could he not go forth and *meet* the sloop, and thereby avert all danger from her it should bring; since on his report it would, of course, put back to Melbourne, whence help could then be sent, if necessary, to the distracted island. On the other hand, Robert perceived that he had deeply offended Murphy. Not only had he brought upon him—itself an unforgivable injury—his master’s wrath; but instead of doing his best to mitigate Kavanagh’s hallucinations, he had pretended to acquiesce in them—or at least in one of them—in order to reap what must have seemed a very trifling advantage. The pair had never been good friends, but up to this time the contempt had always been on Chesney’s side, while the other monopolized the

hate. But now Murphy's scowling face exhibited not only the most furious hostility, but the bitterest scorn.

"You vile young viper!" cried he, "to bite the hand that has fed you. I'll——"

"Silence!" roared Kavanagh. "How dare you use such words to the Deputy-governor! Have I not placed him over you, you dog, you cur"—and as though poor Dick had been indeed the creature by whose name he was thus addressed, he winced and shrank from every word as from a lash—"and is this the reverence you pay to an officer of my choosing? Be off—be off, I say, or I will set it down in the constitution that to call the Deputy-governor 'a vile young viper' is to have earned death." With a subdued though still sullen air Murphy raised his hand to his head—a form of respect enjoined, as Robert rightly guessed, by the new constitution to its founder—and slowly left the room.

"Discipline must be maintained," sighed Kavanagh regretfully; "but it would cause me intense regret to be compelled to hang Dick Murphy. I tell you *what*"—and here his look became intensely cunning—"we'll make a statute that the Governor's wife shall always possess the right of pardon, and then, thanks to Mary, we shall be extricated out of all these little embarrassments. I am so glad you

recognized her, my dear lad; for not to be recognized, is, in society, a very serious annoyance.—And now about these accounts—fill your glass—well, then, *I* will; and, sparing us the details (which are always tedious), tell us what is the gross surplus.”

“There is about eighty pounds remaining, sir. But here are the papers, with every item——”

“Very good; an auditor” (with a wave of his hand) “shall look into them in due time, and I have no doubt will find them correct. As for the eighty pounds, I shall give them to Murphy, whose feelings, I could see, were hurt.”

“You will remember, sir,” urged Robert, “that I have still in my possession untouched the three thousand pounds with which you intrusted me on board the *Star*.”

“Yes, yes; quite right—you must keep that. I am better, much better now in health; but the necessity may still arise for expending it in the manner suggested. The cares of my high office may be too much for me. Do you know, lad” (he laid his hand in his old familiar manner on Robert’s arm, and sunk his voice to a whisper), “I sometimes think my brain is failing me? Suppose the Governor was to go mad like George III.! Don’t you think that should be provided for in the constitution?”

Robert bent his head: he knew not what to say. He was ashamed of his own hypocrisy, and yet what could he do but temporize and effect acquiescence. It was clear that Maguire had not exaggerated Kavanagh's condition, which, moreover, was probably much worse than when he had last appeared in public; nothing, indeed, but the slavish affection of Murphy could be proof against the conviction that his master was a madman. And yet in this man's hands were intrusted the destinies, even to life and death, of all upon the island! These reflections were of a nature to make Robert in no mood for speech, and Kavanagh ran on with his wild words, not only without contradiction, but without interruption. "In case anything should happen to me, Mary, it is true, might be regent; but it is so difficult for a woman to maintain order, when there are revolutionary elements at work; and (between ourselves) they *are* at work even now. No; you, Robert, will be the interim governor, and will also succeed me, in case of my dying without issue. This is very important, and must be entered in the constitution before a witness." The speaker opened the door, and called for Murphy, who rose from the rug outside, on which he had been disconsolately lying, to execute this pressing duty.

The whole interview would have been most dis-

tressing to Robert, were it not that pity for his patron was overborne by the gravest considerations for the future, both for himself and others. When it was over—that is, so soon as he could decently make his escape—he once more ascended the cone-shaped hill, which, with the exception of his own vice-regal two-roomed residence, was the only spot on the whole island where he could obtain even comparative privacy. The summit was a level flat of a few feet square, and lying down on this, with the sky above him, the sea around him, he could fancy himself alone in the world. Standing up, on the other hand, he could not only survey all that insular domain (except what was hidden by the hill itself, which on the harbour side was somewhat precipitous), but could himself be seen from every part of it. Not a tree, not a bush was there to intercept the view; nothing higher than a grass blade, save the few vegetables that already rewarded the industry of the colonists, appeared above the soil of *Murphy's Island*. Even now the home of madness and treachery, and fated, perhaps, to witness as dark deeds as any spot beneath the sun, the place was already become abhorrent to him. He swept the horizon in hopes to see a sail (he cared not what, nor whence it came), with the feverish longing of a shipwrecked man whose scanty store

is lessening fast: but, as his heart foreboded, he looked in vain. The *Star* had been blown much out of her course, or it would never have chanced upon the island, which lay too far to the south-east to be in the track of the Australian traders; the little chart which he spread out before him told him that much; his only hope lay in the comparatively small direct Tasmanian traffic, the ships engaged in which, however, could be seen, if at all, from New Town. He would watch for them night and day, and if seen, do his best to attract their notice. To-morrow, he would propose to Kavanagh that a flagstaff should be placed upon the hill, with a banner flying to proclaim his sovereignty. While pondering in his mind upon these things, he was suddenly startled by a low and sullen roar, followed by a perceptible movement of the air, which seemed to be that of the earth itself. He had heard a royal salute fired from Windsor Castle, so that he recognized this at once for the report of a heavy gun. Leaping to his feet, he once more looked eagerly around, for the sound had seemed to come from no particular quarter, expecting to descry the smoke. But there was no smoke to be seen. He saw the New Town people running along the shore, and presently others from the harbour meeting them, each party, as he rightly guessed, believing that the

vessel came from the opposite side of the island to that on which they were. The whole population, of late so depressed and sluggish, seemed to have wakened into life, clustering together in dark masses, and with a murmurous hum, like bees. They too, perhaps, would have gladly hailed the arrival of a stranger strong enough to overbear the authority of Kavanagh, whose severity in the case of Doolan had alarmed them. It was a proof of their simplicity that only one of them thought of ascending the hill, from which their curiosity, if at all, could have been satisfied at once. Robert did not need his glass to be convinced that this personage was Maguire.

CHAPTER XVII.

Arrested.

"So you are on the look-out, Mr. Chesney, with your map and your glass," said Maguire, when he had come up to Robert's side, "in hopes to see a friendly sail."

He spoke in a dry cynical tone that was habitual to him, but the expression of his face was less grim than usual, though not more genial: it was grave, set, and determined.

"I am looking, like other people," answered Robert carelessly, "for the ship that fired that gun."

"Yes," answered the other contemptuously; "and you were also wishing that you had a white tablecloth to wave, or a pile of wood to fire, in order to attract her attention."

"Why not?" inquired Robert coolly; "all sails are friendly to us here, I suppose."

"To you perhaps they may be; but not to him who rules this island for the nonce, nor to him"—and he struck his own broad breast with his hand—"who is about to rule it. No ship shall land

here with *my* leave; be sure of *that*; and woe be to the man who brings one hither."

"I did not know that the island was provided with such heavy batteries, and that you had the command of them," observed Robert with heightened colour. "As to your menace—if you intend it to be a personal one—it is thrown away upon me."

"Ho, ho! so you have already made up your mind upon the subject we discussed awhile ago. We are to be enemies, are we, Robert Chesney?"

"We are not to be friends, Maguire; if at least you are so free with your threats," answered Robert boldly. "You may kill me—and you look this moment as if you would like to do it—but be sure of this, you shall never bully me. If I had a flag here, I would wave it—if I had a bonfire here, I would light it, though it were to be the last movement of my hand."

"What a pity that I shall some day have to kill you, Chesney, if you let your courage so far outstrip your wits," said Maguire, not without some admiring pity. "It is lucky for you that both you and those poor fools yonder are alike in error respecting the sound you have just heard. That was no ship's gun, my lad, as you imagine, but an earthquake shock. In the China seas I have heard such

more than once, though never in these latitudes.— You doubt me? Well, if it be a ship, then, you may signal her, and may I swing at her yard-arm.”

“An earthquake shock!” answered Robert wonderingly. “Well, it is true I thought I felt the island tremble.”

“And you were right, lad. I have told you the explanation of that; now, why not be taught by me in other matters? Did I deceive you as to the condition of Kavanagh? Is he not stark staring mad? Are not our lives hanging on a mere thread while we submit ourselves to his tyrannical caprices?”

“All that is true,” said Robert firmly. “But I will not have him harmed, that is, as *you* would harm him.”

“You would rather let him kill you than kill *him*, perhaps?” observed Maguire significantly. “And yet,” added he, when the other made no answer, “I have heard it said you once drew a knife upon a man yourself.”

“On Murphy: yes. But I had no other means whereby to defend my life.”

“Oh! that was it,” said Maguire carelessly. “I thought you had a slighter reason. Well, our intelligent friends yonder have hit, I see, at last upon the idea of using the hill as a look-out; and as I

don't want to have to explain to them the phenomena of earthquakes, I shall be off; so good-evening."

He nodded, and moved slowly away towards the harbour. Unconcerned as he strove to appear, Robert knew that Maguire felt baffled, angry, and evilly disposed towards himself; that he had made his last effort to win him over to his views, and was now resolved to act without him—perhaps against him. Full of serious thoughts and apprehensions, Robert felt as little inclined for chatter as his late companion, and went down the hill to his own house. Instigated by some presentiment of danger to those precious treasures, he dug up the flooring of his bed-room, and hid beneath it his map, his telescope, and also a little pocket-compass he had purchased in Melbourne; then feeling that he had taken all the poor precautions that were within his power, he lit his pipe, to think and ponder once again. Before it was smoked out, there came a knock at the door, and Tim appeared at it, pike in hand.

"You're wanted," said he, "at the harbour."

The curtness of the man's manner, and the absence of the "Sir" which he had used but a few hours ago, would have suggested to Robert that there was something amiss, even had there not been at Tim's back two other men, also with pikes,

presenting on the whole a far from friendly looking embassy.

"Why, what's the matter, Tim?" inquired Robert good-naturedly.

"That you must answer to the master—I mean the Governor," was the gruff reply. "I'm to bring you to him, and these are to stay here and search about."

When Tim and his prisoner were on their way together to the Government House, however, the former relaxed in his sternness, and became more communicative. Maguire, it appeared, had impeached Robert to Kavanagh, accusing him of a design to attract strangers to the island, for the purpose of destroying his authority; and the poor mad Governor was more beside himself than ever with fury.

"Bedad, if it's proved against you, he'll string you up just as he did Pat Doolan," was Tim's fixed opinion, in which Robert himself was obliged to concur: and if that was to happen, what would *then* become of Lizzy, left on *Murphy's Island* without even the protection of his slender arm! This reflection, however, instead of paralyzing him, seemed to nerve him with courage, and if it did not sharpen his wits, determined him at least to exercise them without scruple. He had a barbed arrow in his

quiver, which, if the worst came to the worst, he would let fly at Maguire's own breast, be the issue to that traitor what it might.

In front of Government House there was a little crowd assembled, that made way for him with a pitying murmur; and what was far more ominous, there projected from one of its front windows a stout pole, from the end of which a rope was already dangling, the same, no doubt, which had cut short poor Doolan's mortal coil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

High Treason.

ROBERT was ushered by Tim into the same room wherein he had been before admitted, but which now presented a somewhat different appearance. Upon the round table, on which bottle and glasses were still standing, had been hoisted an arm-chair, and in this elevated seat was Kavanagh, holding in his hand, by way of symbol of sovereignty, a wooden ruler, which he waved, as Robert entered, with a majestic air. By his side stood Murphy, with a drawn sword; and in a corner of the room, in an empty tea-chest, which came up to his hips, and supplied the place of a witness-box, stood Maguire—both with the gravest faces, as of persons impressed with a due reverence for judicial ceremonial. Perilous as he felt his position to be, Robert could hardly maintain his gravity at this ludicrous spectacle; though the black beam projecting from the window, and the murmur of hushed expectancy that came up from the crowd below, might well have quenched the mirth of a braver man.

"Robert Chesney," observed the Governor, in a solemn voice, marred, however, by an occasional hiccup, "you are accused of endeavouring to bring upon us a foreign power, thereby to subvert our authority; an offence contrary to the constitution, and which by it is punishable with death. It is my hope, dearly beloved cousin, and second only to ourselves, as you are, within this realm, that you may clear yourself of this hateful charge. But if otherwise, you shall pay the penalty, like the meanest. There stands your accuser!" And Kavanagh pointed to the occupant of the tea-chest with his ruler, and drained a glass of whiskey to the dregs.

Then Maguire repeated so much of the conversation Robert had held with him on the hill as referred to the ship, erroneously expected, adding certain expressions, or aspirations, to which the young fellow had never given utterance, but that really gave a certain treasonous aspect to what had been said, well fitted to inflame a tyrant's suspicions. The very repetition of his story, in fact, evidently aroused Kavanagh's jealousy and alarm, and at its conclusion it was with an impatient gesture that he motioned to the accused, and bade him say what he had to say in his defence.

"Much of that which Maguire has stated, sir," said Robert firmly, "is a malicious lie; but as to

my saying that I intended to hail the ship, if such it had proved to be, I did say so; nor did I know—nor do I—that I should have done wrong in so doing.”

“Death, by article nineteen of the constitution,” observed Kavanagh hastily. “Get ready the rope there.”

“Am I to be punished, sir,” pleaded the unhappy lad, “for transgressing a law of which I was wholly ignorant.”

“It’s the same in the British constitution, my good fellow,” observed Kavanagh cheerfully.

“That may be, sir; but the one that you have so wisely framed upon its model should not copy its faults. Doubtless, all the rest of your subjects have been made acquainted with this admirable document, whereas I alone, when it was proclaimed, was absent from the island upon business of your own and of the state.”

Kavanagh shook his head.

“*De minimis non curat lex*,” said he: “we can’t take notice of these little matters. Are you acquainted with any just cause or impediment—No; that’s not it. Have you any reason to offer”—and here he put on his black skull-cap, like a judge who is about to award the last penalty of the

law—"why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

"Yes," answered Robert boldly, "I have a state secret—the revelation of which may well earn for me my life at your hands—and which I pray you to let me whisper in your ear."

"Whisper in my ear?—how the deuce can he do that, Murphy? I'm too high up. This has not been provided for in the constitution."

A stool, however, was brought, and Robert, ascending it, spoke a few words earnestly to Kavanagh in a low tone. They seemed to affect him in an extreme degree.

"Tim!" cried he to the sentinel excitedly, "go to New Town, and fetch our royal consort, Mary Becher."

Tim scratched his head; the mandate being unintelligible to him, as it well might be.

"It's Mary Beamish that the Governor means," observed Dick in explanation.

"*It's not!*" roared Kavanagh, in a transport of fury.—"What do *you* say, Robert? *You* know it's Mary Becher, don't you?"

Robert assented eagerly: he would have recognized her with equal facility as Mary de' Medici, Mary of Burgundy, or Mary Queen of Scots.

"*Now* I know who are the traitors!" exclaimed

Kavanagh, looking reproachfully at Murphy, and then casting an angry glance upon Maguire, who, indeed, if to grow pale and red by turns is to be of doubtful loyalty, exhibited very traitorous symptoms. "But nevertheless let the crime be proved."

Here the door opened and admitted Mary Beamish, whom Tim had found in the crowd without, all the inhabitants of New Town having by this time congregated thither at the news of Robert's impeachment. She was a pretty brunette enough, and the slight paleness caused by her alarm at this unexpected summons mitigated her somewhat too rosy charms.

"We sent for you, Mary," explained Kavanagh with elaborate courtesy, "to know from your own lips whether that man yonder"—pointing to Maguire—"has ever ventured to abuse your ear by protestations of affection? Speak the truth, and fear not."

Mary hung her head and blushed.

"Mr. Maguire has courted me," faltered she; "but"——

"Ah! you concealed the matter that the wretch might keep his life," interrupted Kavanagh.

"Well, sir," continued the puzzled girl, "I thought him too old and too ugly."

"Most faithful of women!" ejaculated Kavanagh

admiringly, "you have said enough.—Tim, remove our consort.—What ho! without there; get the rope ready! Maguire shall swing. Executioner, do your duty."

Maguire turned deadly pale, and thrust his hand into his breast: but the weapon that he looked for was not there. He had come unarmed to a council where affairs, as he thought, could never have taken a turn so perilous to himself. Murphy was advancing towards him with a rope to pinion his wrists, when Robert suddenly interposed. He certainly owed this man no favour, but the idea of his being put to death at his instigation was abhorrent to him.

"I humbly beg, sir, that you will spare Maguire's life," cried he.

"Why so?" asked Kavanagh testily. "He is your own enemy."

"I know it, sir; and for that very reason would not have his blood upon my hands."

"Blood upon my hands!" repeated Kavanagh fiercely, and looking at his own fingers. "What is that to you? Have you not just heard that he has committed high treason? You call yourself my loyal subject, and yet you would have me pardon him. You ask his life—well, take it, then. The man is free; and now I have not a friend, not one, not one—but you, Dick."

Murphy had run to his master, and was now helping him to descend from his chair of state with affectionate solicitude. "Blood on my hands, Dick! Did you hear him? I will never forgive him that. Send them away, send them away!"

As Maguire and Robert went down the stairs together from the hall of audience, the former grasped the latter's arm.

"You turned the tables on me well," he whispered in harsh and grating tones. "Where you erred was in not pushing your advantage." And he pointed to the noose that still swung menacingly above their heads. The next moment he was lost in the throng that crowded about Chesney noisily congratulating him on his acquittal, and overwhelming him with questions; but his words rang long in Robert's ears. It had been indeed imprudent in him to offend Kavanagh, as he had manifestly done, by pleading for this man's life, who, without provocation, would have taken his own; and now, as impervious to gratitude as to mercy, it was plain he would never rest till he had destroyed him. With Murphy, Maguire had still great influence, so long as it was not used against his master; and there was nothing, Robert felt, but Kavanagh's waning favour to preserve him from the fate that he had for the nonce escaped but by a hair-breadth.

These forebodings were in some measure corroborated by finding himself on the succeeding day denied to Kavanagh—with whom he had wished to confer respecting the house-building at New Town, which was proceeding with more despatch than care—and also by the establishment of a sentry on the hill-top, who had orders to prevent any person ascending the same. This latter arrangement, as Robert only too well understood, being to give Kavanagh early and exclusive news of a ship's approach.

On the other hand, Chesney was not personally interfered with; his authority, both at New Town and elsewhere, seemed to be acknowledged as usual, and indeed he was thought to be in especially high favour with the Governor, since he was allowed to use the little boat. In this he paddled about for hours daily, not for pleasure, but in order to make it an accustomed sight, so that, should the opportunity arise of going out to meet the sloop, his doing so should not excite comment. No opposition was even offered when he tried the experiment of beaching the gig at New Town, instead of leaving it in the harbour, though he had reason to suspect that a messenger had been despatched from the latter place to learn whether he had returned to the island. To Maguire, and probably to Murphy,

the news that he had not done so would have been welcome, for it was not likely, if once carried out to sea in such a tiny craft, he would ever have seen land again. There was much to do in the way of superintendence of affairs, for little as he knew about agricultural matters, he knew more than his brother-colonists; while in the matter of architecture, since it was almost wholly confined to carpentering, his advice and help were always in request. It was fortunate that it was so, for if he had had less to occupy him, he would have been consumed with anxieties and apprehensions upon Lizzy's account, the time for whose arrival, as he calculated, was now drawing very near. He had no doubt that the Alstons would at once embrace the opportunity that had been offered them, and leave England by the next mail; and bitterly indeed he now regretted the haste he had urged them to use. His hope was that they had found themselves unable to so immediately obey his summons, and that before another two months had passed help might arrive from some unlooked-for quarter. If not, and especially if anything should happen to Kavanagh, who was understood to be in very ill health—or at least that was the reason given for the denial he always met with at Government House—he might expect the worst indeed. In the mean time he seemed to be growing

more and more out of favour with the Governor, who had sent him orders, through Murphy, that he was to confine himself to his own district of New Town, and not presume to come over to the harbour without permission; an edict which, as he guessed, had a similar intention with that of the appointment of the hill-sentry; other persons had made the same calculations as himself respecting the probable arrival of the sloop.

One morning early, there came a timid knock at his door, and rising in haste, though nearly dressed—for he held himself, day and night, in readiness to take to the boat at a moment's notice—he found Mary Beamish. This girl was very grateful to him for having delivered her from the persecutions of Maguire, who, since the day that had so nearly proved fatal to him, had not ventured to molest her, and was well aware of his anxiety on Lizzy's account, with which (in spite of a little tenderness she felt for Robert herself) she warmly sympathized.

"What is it, Mary?" inquired he eagerly.

"Come to our cottage, sir, and I'll tell you," said she cautiously. "I cannot tell you in the street."

"But is the sloop come? For Heaven's sake tell me *that*."

"Yes, it arrived not an hour ago; and has sailed away again. I could not get to tell you sooner."

"But Lizzy? Is she at the harbour?"

"No, indeed, sir; you must not go to the harbour. Mr. Maguire, bad cess to him! would only be too glad to see you disobeying orders.—Well, stop one moment;" and as Robert was about to start madly off at the top of his speed, she lifted the latch of the cottage door, and added with a sly smile, "She's *here*, sir." The next instant he was clasped in Lizzy's arms.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Embarkation.

"*I'm* here!" observed a dogged voice presently; not as a warning that there was a spectator of the fond pair's rapture (which indeed they already had in Mary), but as a hint that he had been overlooked.

"Oh, Jim, of course," said Robert, a little awkwardly, but shaking him all the more warmly by the hand, to make up for the neglect.

Jim was not improved in appearance since the old forest days. He had that slouching, defiant look which is acquired from habitual conflict with the law, and he looked dissatisfied besides. "This ain't much of a place," said he, "to come to, across the world, considering how you've cracked it up. There is not a tree as I can see, and where the game's to come from"—

"O Jim! how *can* you," broke in Lizzy tearfully, "after what your mother said!" She was not easily moved to tears, as Robert knew, but he had perceived that she was in deep mourning, and

guessed the cause, which had prevented him from asking after her mother.

"O yes," continued Jim, "it's all very fine for you, who have your young man here, which is all you want. But what *I* want to know is, Why we're here? Why didn't we stay in Melbourne? where we should have been right enough, and Robert have joined us there, instead of"—

"I could not join you there," interposed Robert gravely. "I wish I could have done so. It is a long sad story. This place is all you think of it, James, and much, much worse"—

"Hush, hush!" interposed Mary warningly, and pointing to the door of the other room that made up the cottage, and in which the rest of the Beamish family were asleep. "Tell him all that another time—not here: it is not safe. Take them both over to your house to breakfast."

"You have sense in your head, young woman," observed Jim approvingly.

"And kindness in her heart, I am sure," added Lizzy gratefully. "She has been so kind to me, Robert!"

"Don't speak of that, miss," said Mary; "it was only fortunate that I happened to have been asked to stay with some friends at the harbour for a few days, and so chanced to be there last night when

you arrived. I knew that my mother's roof, such as it is, would give you welcome, and I also knew that Mr. Chesney here would have gone mad, if you did not come to New Town. Both Maguire and Murphy, sir" (turning to Robert), "looked very black at me, but, thanks to you, I have my own way with everybody now."

And so it was. The Governor in no way molested her, but his craze of imagining her to be his consort made her much "looked up to" by the colony in general; while after the lesson that Maguire had received, he scrupulously avoided her presence, though without doubt awaiting his own day of recompense.

A few hours put Robert in possession of all that had happened to Lizzy since he sailed to seek what he now felt to be indeed an ill-starred fortune. Her mother had succumbed to the illness of which she had written to him while at Liverpool, and that loss to the orphaned girl had been more deplorable, since it rendered her more subject to the hateful solicitations of John Rowland. Her brother indeed remained to her, but it was easy to see, though Lizzy strove to disguise it, that he had not played the part of guardian as he should have done. Perhaps he was too much in Rowland's power to do so; perhaps he was not unwilling to become allied

by marriage with one who could not only screen his offences, but offer him great opportunities for indulging in his favourite pursuit. At all events, it was plain that poor Lizzy had been greatly persecuted. Love alone could scarcely have accounted for the rapture which she now evinced in having found a home, which, humble though it was, was subject to no intrusion, or for the happy confidence she showed in Robert's protecting arm. He had not the heart to fully disclose to her how weak that arm really was; and indeed it would have been hard to convince his hearers, fresh from the well-ordered glades of Windsor, of the abnormal and anarchic condition of things on *Murphy's Island*, and of the perils from a mad despot in the one case, from a revengeful traitor in the other, in which they stood. What he told them did but make Jim more than ever curse his fate in having quitted, first England, and then Melbourne, for "this cussed island;" a very natural, but at the same time an ungenerous expression of feeling, whereat Robert winced; while, on the other hand, it made Lizzy nestle in his arms the closer, whose dear embrace filled him with trembling fears. When he bethought him how, that for his sake, and at his invitation, she had come to such a perilous spot, her very beauty sent a chill to his heart. She was more

beautiful even than when he had seen her last, and as he had so often pictured her, while absent. She was no longer the tall and slender girl that had hung upon his neck in passionate farewell, but six months ago, but a graceful woman. Her simple mourning dress became her admirably; the one black ribbon that confined her plentiful soft brown hair was, in his eyes at least, more attractive than a circlet of pearls; the small white collar about her shapely throat embellished it better than a diamond necklace, save that the latter would have less concealed its charms. *Her* pearls and diamonds were in her eyes, from which the happy tears would gather at his words of love and comfort, to be kissed away by his long stunted lips. And yet one of that reunited pair, at least, was well aware that it was no time for courtship and love-passages; and how to escape from *Murphy's Island* was the one thought that occupied him whenever he dared to think. Notwithstanding that when she was out of his sight, he always trembled for Lizzy's safety, he did not omit once a day to put to sea as usual in his little boat, and coast round to the opposite side of the island, where alone he could hope to catch sight of some passing sail. He would have taken Lizzy with him, had he dared, but fraught with danger as his position was in any case, to have infringed Kavanagh's edict

would, he felt, be at once to draw down on him—or, what was worse, on her—the pent-up vengeance of Maguire. That Kavanagh, if not won over by the latter, was at all events growing more and more unfavourable towards himself, was only too plain; not only was he still forbidden to approach the harbour, but the permission he had applied for, to give up his own residence to Lizzy and her brother, had been coldly—perhaps cynically—denied to him, as being derogatory to Robert's position as Lieutenant-governor. Under pretence of being his servant, however, Jim was allowed to have a lodging under his roof, a privilege only granted perhaps because it was known that it would not add to his own domestic comfort. James Alston indeed had shown himself little less than an enemy of Robert's. He spoke ill of him, or, at all events, in dissatisfied and grumbling terms, throughout the island; and was in consequence received into open favour with Murphy, and, as was whispered, by Maguire himself. Another, though less particular reason for his being "taken up with," by the former at least, was his love for drink, which, always manifest in him, had become on the island, where strong liquor was only too easily procurable, very pronounced indeed. He would come home from the harbour drunk, to the Lieutenant-governor's residence, and

behave not only with disrespect, but in the most offensive manner, to Lizzy's inexpressible concern: at last, coming home one evening more intoxicated than usual, when his sister and Robert chanced to be taking a walk together, and finding the boat as usual drawn up upon the beach, he launched it, and paddled out to sea. Robert saw him from the shore, and hurried home, not daring to communicate to Lizzy the apprehensions that audacious act inspired within him; but the mischief had been done. Even if the fact of this contravention of the law could have been concealed through the good nature of those who witnessed it—which was more than doubtful, since Jim had rendered himself far from popular in New Town—the culprit would have thrown away that chance, for he boasted openly of the deed, affirming in one breath that he was an Englishman, who owed no obedience to Kavanagh nor any other “Irish body,” and in the next, that Murphy and Maguire were hand-in-glove with him, and would see he did not come to harm.

The next morning, he was seized under Chesney's roof, and carried off to the harbour, where the latter dared not follow him: the arrest itself might have been made, and very likely was so, with the very intention of thus getting the Lieutenant-governor into the net of despotic law; and though

he would have run the risk had he himself only stood in peril, he dared not do so with Lizzy dependent on him. Moreover, he did not anticipate any very severe sentence upon Alston, from the fact of his connection with Murphy. Lizzy, however, was beyond measure alarmed and solicitous upon her brother's account, and at once hastened over with Mary Beamish to Government House. With Kavanagh she was sternly denied an interview; but Maguire coolly informed her that if her brother's life was spared it would be so, as Robert's had been, on the condition that he should make a disclosure of certain state secrets, and in the mean time, he was to remain in prison. To Lizzy this was inexplicable, but Robert understood but too well what it meant: James Alston was to be kept in confinement, with the fear of death hanging over him, until he should confess to some treasonable words spoken by the Lieutenant-governor; and indeed, when in company with his sister, he had heard Robert speak frankly enough, and needed no imagination to invent them. Whether he should have the baseness to betray them, was at present doubtful; but the one thing certain, whether as regarded the prisoner's fate or his own, was, that not a moment was to be lost in leaving the island. The state of affairs had become intolerable, and must

be put an end to at all risks. Robert could now handle the boat with ease, whether with sail or oar; and small as she was, had acquired great confidence in her. So long as the sea was tolerably smooth—and it was now fair weather—he felt that she would float well enough; though anything like a gale would without doubt sink her. He knew his course to Melbourne, and made up his mind to tempt the dangers of the deep, though it was but in a cockleshell, rather than trust any longer to the caprice of a madman or the mercy of a villain. He had small hope indeed of reaching the main-land in such a craft; but it was not impossible, could he keep her above water, that he might fall in with some passing vessel: in that case, no matter what she was, nor whither she was bound, help for Lizzy would surely be obtained, for had he not about him the money wherewith to purchase it! At any moment he might be himself arrested, or the permission to enter the boat withdrawn from him, and even this last desperate plan be thereby entirely frustrated; so he set about his arrangements at once. His glass, his compass, and his map he disinterred from their hiding-place, and concealed them in the gig; he also stored an abundance of water and provisions ready to place on board of it at the last moment. But he could not go—he had not the heart

to do so—without acquainting Lizzy with his intention.

“It is a wild and desperate hazard, darling,” said he, having set before her both the perils that he was about to flee from, and those which he must needs incur; “but it is the last chance left to me, and I must take it.”

“Take it,” cried she, “and may Heaven prosper it; but if you love me, Robert, grant me one thing: take *me* with you!”

At this proposition Chesney was greatly alarmed and distressed. He had expected arguments against his own departure, but this sympathetic compliance with it embarrassed him far more than opposition could have done. The idea was hopeless, preposterous. To dare the ocean in so frail a bark himself, he knew to be perilous in excess; but to permit one so delicate and precious to share that peril, was not to be thought of. And yet she pleaded hard, and not without some show of argument and good sense.

“I could say, Robert, that without you, and knowing the dangers to which you were exposed, life would be here intolerable to me; I could say that, left without your protection, I would rather die than trust myself to the tender mercies of such men as Maguire and Murphy, who would at once

guess that you had taken flight, and take vengeance upon poor me, who would alone be within their power; but you have thought of these things yourself, I know, though you have been silent on them for my sake. Let me remind you rather of what you have forgotten: how useful my poor help may be to you. I know nothing of the sea, it is true, but on the river, remember, I have learned to manage both sail and tiller; the little boat will trim no worse, but the better for my weight, and even for the greater quantity of provisions that my presence may make necessary. If you perish, let me perish with you, which would be more merciful to me than to bid me live on; and if, through Heaven's mercy, we escape, let us escape together."

Such were, in brief, her arguments, which, backed by tears and kisses, in the end prevailed on her lover to carry her with him. As Robert had access to the provision store, the preliminary arrangements were soon completed, and the very next evening was fixed upon for the adventure. It was necessary to delay till after dusk, in order that they should elude the pinnacle, which, without doubt, would instantly be sent after them. But with eight hours or so of clear start, Robert hoped that he would elude pursuit; once out of sight of the island, he would be safe: not even Maguire was capable of

shaping his course to Melbourne without the aid of a compass, and fortunately enough, there was none such on the island save that which Robert possessed. The date of the fugitive's escape was delayed by a curious circumstance. Robert, who had purposely avoided Lizzy's company for some hours, in order to avoid suspicion, was alone in his house, making a few final preparations, when suddenly a violent report shook the frail tenement, so that the glass fell from the windows, and everything on the shelves was thrown to the ground. The whole population of the village were in the street in an instant, to seek the explanation of the phenomenon, which they deemed as before to proceed from the explosion of some gigantic piece of ordnance; for the sky was without a cloud, and no indication of thunder was to be felt in the atmosphere, which was serene and cool. Lizzy herself, accompanied by Mary Beamish, ran across to Robert's house, and, with joyful cries, averred that some ship of war was nearing the harbour. He met them at the door, with an excited but unjoyful face.

"The sentry is still on the hill-top," said he, "which shows that he has seen no ship. My belief is that it is"—before he could say "an earthquake," another shock took place, even more violent than before, and accompanied by a strange appearance

in the sea; the waves were rising and roaring upon the shore like water that is about to boil.

"The boat, the boat!" cried he, and rushed down to the spot where it was beached, a little remote from the village, followed by the two young women. With their assistance he was able to drag it up far higher on the shore; but they were only just in time. The waves, gathering strength and volume every moment, swept over the very place where it had lain in a few minutes, and one even, the sixth and largest, caught themselves as they fled up-hill before it; they escaped, however, with a thorough wetting, and the boat being laden, was too heavy to be dragged down by its recoil. After the sixth wave, the sea went back again to its usual limits, but continued greatly disturbed. The houses in New Town were all more or less damaged, and one or two swept away: though there were no lives lost, the people were in a state of great perplexity and alarm, which Robert in vain attempted to allay by assuring them that the earthquake was over. He could convince none except Lizzy and Mary, who had been greatly impressed by his sagacity in respect to the danger that menaced the boat; although he was solely indebted for his knowledge to a narrative he had somewhere read of the great earthquake at Lisbon, where the waves had risen and swallowed

up the land. Now was the time, when men's minds were occupied with vague terrors, and disinclined to concern themselves with the affairs of others, for the fugitives to put their plan into execution: at nightfall, accordingly, by which hour the sea had resumed its former calm, Robert and Lizzy stole out to where they had left the boat, and proceeded to push it down the hill. As they were thus employed, a hand was laid upon Robert's arm, and his blood ran cold within him. To be served with a writ of *ne exeat regno* at such a momentous crisis would have gone nigh to kill him, and he expected no less than to see Maguire or Murphy, with help to back them, come to forbid his departure. To his immense relief, however, his eyes only met Mary's pretty face, with a sad sweet smile upon it.

"So you are going away—you two—without even a good-bye to me," sighed she.

"We are, dear Mary," answered Lizzy: "we did not tell you of our intention, only in order that you might be in ignorance when taxed with the knowledge of it by others. Besides, in a few weeks at farthest, with Heaven's aid, we hope to be back again with help for my poor brother and for all of you."

"I knew Mr. Chesney was going," said Mary softly. "I felt that the boat was heavier than it

should be, when I helped to beach it to-day. 'There are provisions in it,' said I to myself, 'under that tarpauling;' nor would he, I felt, have shown such anxiety about the safety of the gig, had he meant it to serve only as a fishing-boat. Yes; I knew *he* was going, and even guessed that it would be to-night; but I never dreamed of your accompanying him, Lizzy."

"Will you come also?" said Lizzy tenderly. "There is room, and there is food."

"No, dear, no," answered Mary. "The temptation is great, but the people here will have no friend but me when Mr. Chesney has gone, and I am of use to them in many ways; above all, I cannot leave my mother."

"In a fortnight's time, be sure we shall meet again, Mary," said Robert consolingly. "Not one instant shall be lost by me in procuring assistance for you all—for you *above* all, Mary," and he kissed her cheek, "to whom we both owe so much."

"You will do your best, as you always do for others," answered she gravely; "but something tells me that the help will come too late—that we are parting for ever. That is why I could not help coming here to say good-bye."

After a few more words of consolation from Robert, which the girl acknowledged in silence,

with the same sad smile, and after the two young women had affectionately embraced, the boat was launched, Mary running into the waves, and pushing it off with her own hands. Robert watched her standing on the shore until her form faded away into the dusk; every stroke of his oars sounding in his ears like a muffled funeral bell. I think that Lizzy also knew that Mary loved him, and pitied her, not with the contemptuous pity that some who have won the wealth for which they toiled have for the poor, and that some women have for their unsuccessful rivals, but with true and genuine tenderness.

“Since it cannot now be seen from the island,” said Robert, breaking the long silence, “we can put up the sail;” and he did so.

CHAPTER XX.

Gone Under.

THEY sailed all night, the sea being tolerably tranquil, in what Robert judged to be the right direction; but the clouds gathered heavily, and hid the stars, so that he could make use neither of them nor of the compass. Lizzy was very helpful to him in the management of the boat, and he allowed her to do more than was necessary, in order to distract her thoughts. As for sleep, anxiety forbade her even to close her eyes. At sunrise, which in these latitudes occurs at once, without the streaks of dawn that herald it at home, they looked anxiously about them, and beheld the island still lying at a great distance. The wind had unfortunately changed in the night, and their course with it. They lowered their sail at once, in hopes to have escaped observation, and Robert took to the oars, and pulled his best. But either the sail had already attracted the notice of those on land, or the gig itself was discernible by means of the telescope. Before half-an-hour had elapsed, their worst apprehensions were confirmed by seeing the pinnacle leave the harbour,

and, with a favourable breeze, bear directly down upon them. Robert once more put up the little sail, and rowed as before with all his might, while Lizzy steered; but it was evident that his exertions were useless.

"We are lost," he murmured, "and I have been her destruction." He felt sure that Kavanagh, urged by Maguire, would condemn Lizzy to death for disobeying his edict, probably without permitting him to speak in her defence: nay, if permitted, what would his words avail!

Lizzy awaited her fate in silence, keeping her loving eyes fixed on her companion's face; there were no tears in them now: English born and English bred, she was not one easily to give up hope, nor, indeed, was she so deeply impressed as Robert was with Kavanagh's despotic power. "He would surely never put her brother to death, though he might frighten him, far less herself, or Robert."

She was soon fated to be undeceived. The pinnacle came up to them very rapidly, and on her deck they could perceive Murphy himself, with three of the most devoted of his adherents. The former levelled a revolver at Robert's head as she came alongside, and bade him and "the deserter" come on board. There was nothing for it but to

obey. The unhappy fugitives were transferred to the pinnacle, which immediately put about for the island—clumsily enough, for Murphy knew little of seamanship, and his men less—with the gig fastened by a rope in tow. Robert was bound hand and foot, and thrown into the bows. Only one sentence more was vouchsafed by Murphy. “It is lucky for you, traitor,” said he to his prisoner, “that Maguire was not in my place. He would have shot you down like a dog. There is now, however, twelve hours of life before you, since you will die at sunset. As for this girl, she will not be hung, since I have taken a fancy to her myself; and he looked towards Lizzy with sullen approval.

“Fool, idiot, that I was!” thought Robert, his helpless frame trembling with fury. He had had a pistol in his pocket, and might have settled accounts at least with this miscreant at the moment when he was overtaken, but he had forbore to do it, upon Lizzy’s account, and lest the other men, who were also armed, might in revenge have killed her on the spot. Now, for her sake, he regretted that he had not done so. The poor girl was sitting in the stern, with her eyes fixed on the sea, and her face pale as death—the death which Robert knew that she was meditating. After Murphy’s

words she had made up her mind not to be carried ashore alive. Presently, the sea became extraordinarily agitated, and the vessel, guided as it was by such unskilful hands, began to be unmanageable.

"If you will loose my limbs," said Robert, "I will save the ship: otherwise, you will all four go to the bottom sooner than you expected."

The three men looked at Murphy, as much as to say, "There is something in that."

"The Governor's orders were, that he was to be bound hand and foot," mused Murphy; "but then, on the other hand, he was to be brought back; and if we sink, that can't be done." On the whole, he thought his master's orders—and he thought of nothing else—justified him in cutting Robert's bonds, and handing him the tiller—not, however, without this caution: "If you do not steer direct for the island, I will blow your brains out."

"I must steer as the sea will let me," answered Robert coolly. A grim calmness had settled down upon him; the thought that he could kill Murphy at any moment was a very considerable comfort: and whenever he looked towards Lizzy, he longed to do so. The sea still continued very rough, notwithstanding that there was scarcely any wind, and a cloudless sky. A wave would sometimes sweep

the deck from end to end, and the blinding spray dashed over the bows like a fountain.

"You are not steering for the harbour!" roared Murphy presently, and fingering the butt of his revolver.

"The spray flies so high and thick that I cannot even see the island," was Robert's quiet reply. "Where is it?"

Ay, where *was* it? It had been seen a minute ago about half a league to the south-west, and now it was not visible.

Murphy and his men looked out for it with eager eyes; Lizzy lifted up her head, and languidly looked about her, though the question had little interest for her, since she never meant to set foot upon the shore. Robert, who knew the very place where it ought to be, could see nothing, though his gaze was prolonged and fixed. This was the more extraordinary, for at this time the waves began sensibly to abate and the spray with it. The sea, and nothing else, was to be beheld on all sides. Incredible as the fact seemed, there could be no doubt about it: *The island was gone.*

They sailed on in the direct course in which it ought to lie; but as though it had been a floating island, with power of rapid locomotion, it eluded them.

"There is some witchcraft in this," exclaimed Murphy, turning furiously towards Lizzy. "It is you who have done it, you fair-faced devil."

Robert took out his pistol, cocked it, and placed it on the seat behind him. One of the crew, however, stepped between the girl and Murphy.

"That is nonsense, Dick," said he. "There has been murder enough done already, and who knows but on that very account this thing has happened. Remember Pat Doolan!"

"But the young masther!" ejaculated Murphy with a groan of agony. "What *can* have become of him? O sir"—here he burst into tears, and turned to Robert with outstretched hands and suppliant voice—"I have done you wrong, and meant you worse, but you loved the young masther once yourself—I know it, for that was why I hated you—I pray you, then, for his sake, tell me what has happened! You know so much, while I—I only know that I have lost him!"

With that he grovelled on the deck, and would have clasped Robert's knees, had he permitted it. "Are you sure, are you quite sure that this is where the island was?"

"I am quite sure of that," answered Robert gravely; "and what has become of it, I think I can

also tell you. I have no more experience of such matters than yourself, but I have read that islands are sometimes cast up in the sea, and there remain for many months and years, and then again are swallowed up with shocks as of an earthquake as quickly as they came; and such, as I believe, has been the fate of this one; at all events, it is beyond a doubt that underneath us now is the grave of all your friends, and some of mine."

Lizzy, notwithstanding the miracle, as it seemed, that had been wrought for her deliverance, was weeping bitterly for the fate of her ill-starred brother. Robert, too, hung his head, thinking of the self-sacrificing hands that had pushed his boat off but a few hours ago from what then was land, and were now tossing unlife-like beneath the wave with shingle and with shell. The men, too, were deeply affected, and gazed down into the blue depths, as though it were possible to descry within them the forms of their lost friends — wives, children, comrades. Perhaps, poor fellows, they were simple enough to suppose that the island might presently reappear again, with nobody much the worse. Murphy still knelt in the boat, with his clasped hands before his face—a piteous spectacle. After a pause, passed in unutterable thoughts, Robert again broke silence: "There is no use in our re-

maining here, Murphy," said he firmly; "I shall steer for Melbourne."

"You will do as you please, sir," answered the other in broken tones, "and these men will obey you. The masther said that if anything happened to him, you were to be his successor."

These words were spoken with a certain reverential humility, as though Chesney had actually become invested with a portion of that authority which, with Murphy, stood in the place of all others—human or Divine. All at once he sprang to his feet, and stood in the attitude of one who listens attentively.

"What do you hear?" asked Robert anxiously. It was just possible that another volcanic shock, such as had doubtless submerged the island, had given warning of its approach, though to his own ear nothing was apparent but the soft splash of the wave and the flutter of the sail, for the boat was almost stationary.

"I hear his voice," cried Murphy. "'Dick, Dick!' he says, soft and low, just as he used to whisper when I was down with the fever, and he was minding me. I'm coming, I'm coming, masther!"

And before any one could interfere, the faithful foolish fellow had placed his foot upon the

gunwale, and with tight folded arms had leaped into the sea. He was a strong and active swimmer, as all well knew, but he never rose again. Robert would have given much to see him do so, for in that act of fidelity—dog-like or madman-like though it might be, but inexpressibly touching—all the wrongs done or intended to him or his were forgotten; but they watched for him in vain: Murphy had gone to join his master. After half-an-hour of fruitless waiting, the pinnace was put about, and sailed for Melbourne. They would have had to endure much privation on the way, even had they reached it at all, since the store of provisions in the gig was very insufficient for five persons; but on the second day they fell in with a vessel bound for England, which took them all on board. The terrible and unlooked-for destruction that had overwhelmed their friends—though at the same time it had preserved themselves—for some time overshadowed the lovers. For Mary, they both mourned; Lizzy bewailed her brother, for whose fate Robert could not be expected to feel poignant grief; while on the other hand Kavanagh's loss appeared far otherwise to him than to Lizzy, or than it had done to himself at the moment of their own deliverance. The acts of violence committed by the "young master" from first to last, and inclusive of his

brother's murder, he honestly ascribed to madness, to which indeed they were doubtless due: how far that madness had been induced by passion and want of moral control, and finally by drink, was a question into which he dared not look. What he strove to remember now was only the drowned man's tenderness and trust. Lewis had perished without leaving any heirs, so that the bequest of the three thousand pounds—with the deduction of that large proportion of it which he did not forget to bestow on the three survivors from Murphy's Island, in accordance with Kavanagh's wishes—might fairly be considered to be his own. The first sum which he expended out of it on arriving in England went to the purchase of a marriage ring; and during the time which the cruelty of the law interposed between him and wedded bliss, he placed his Lizzy under the care of Mistress Mulvaney. To the former's surprise, and indeed not a little to her scandal, the widow welcomed him with a hearty embrace. "I never thought to see you again, my brave boy," cried she, "nor to hear anything of you, save that you had come to grief; far less such good news as this;" and here she kissed Lizzy. "You went away from my house, lad, in very indifferent company: as to one of them, I ask no question, for ever since what happened at Falston Hall I washed

my hands of him. But how is that ne'er-do-well, Dick?"

Robert's face told her before he could reply in words. The widow plumped down on the little sofa—it was in the old smoke-room that the interview took place—and burst into tears.

"Heaven forgive me for speaking ill of the dead!" cried she; "and he such a broth of a boy! But tell me all about it."

Robert did not tell her all, or perhaps she would once more have altered her opinions; but he told her what he could of good about him; and especially concerning his end.

"I never thought Dick would overlive his master," was the widow's quiet comment when she had recovered herself. "Do you remember what you wrote about him to your pretty sweetheart here, comparing his fidelity to that of a dog? He got hold of that letter, and made me read it to him in this very room; and when I got to that part of it, the poor fellow only said, 'Well, that's true enough;' as though he was proud of it."

With his remaining two thousand pounds or so, Robert purchased a little business in the cabinet-making line, for which he had always had a taste; and being not only diligent himself, but having a diligent wife—which always doubles a poor man's

gains—he soon became prosperous enough. The first article of any elaboration that he turned out with his own hands was a tea-caddy, which now forms the admiration of the patrons of Mulvaney's. The outside has succumbed to the all-pervading influence of the place, but the inside—and this Mrs. Mulvaney persists in ascribing to its excellent workmanship, rather than to its contents—has up to this time successfully resisted the flavour of onions. Robert has one son, named after himself. He would have called him "Frank," after his benefactor, but Lizzy opposed it. "Mr. Kavanagh was very good to us," pleaded she, "I own; but I do not wish my boy to remind me in any way, even in name, of a mur—I mean, of Murphy's Master." In graceful return for this compliance, when a little girl arrived to make their home complete in its domestic furniture, her mother named her Mary. As for the other Mary—Mary Becher—so strangely and unwittingly mingled with their fortunes, nothing could be heard of her, though Robert did his best to find her out. He felt that the least they could do was to share with her, should she need it, the abundance with which they had been dowered by him she had known and loved as Wilson. It is probable, however, that he had amply provided for her before he quitted England.

The Chesneys lead a happy quiet life, and they desire no other. The love of adventure with which Robert was once possessed has been fully satisfied, and he is very reticent concerning his past experience. As a customer of his of some standing, and admitted in some sort to his familiarity, as being an amateur cabinet-maker who has a turning-lathe of his own, I gained possession of the foregoing facts; but I should not have done so, had I not, in addition to those pretensions, happened to disclose the circumstance that I had been witness to a certain scene at a turnpike gate near Windsor Forest, on one stormy winter night, which was, as it turned out, the prologue to his own eventful history. I, too, although but for a few moments, had seen both Murphy and Murphy's master, and therefore seemed entitled to be told their story.

To assert its truth would seem to be to protest too much; but as a satisfaction to that considerable class of the community who "only believe what they read in the newspapers," I may add that its most singular feature—the sinking of a populated island—was recorded in the columns of the *Times* within the last three years.

THE END.

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